THE MARRIOTTS AND THE POWELLS

By

ISABELLA HOLT

Mrs. Charles L. Holt

requests the honour of your presence

at the marriage of her daughter

Isabella

to

Mr. Haldeman Finnie

on Saturday the twenty-second of April

at four o'clock

First Presbyterian Church

Lake Forest, Illinois

Reception

after the ceremony

The Homestead

30 South Sheridan Road

Lake Forest

Please reply

38 Bellevue Place, Chicago

Irene Owen Andrews

November 1921

Belated but Enthusiastic on Miss Holt.

Miss Isabella Holt's "The Marriotts and the Powells" is a really good first novel, because it has a quality which is rare in American fiction and because its faults are faults which Miss Holt will outgrow. It has leisure. I do not mean that the characters are men and women who are not hurried and harried, but that the author somehow has got into her book a feeling that she has taken time to think things out. The book is not fortuitous—except at the end. Its very previous charm makes the ending, and the few chapters after the boys go off to war betray haste, as though Miss Holt had suddenly gone cold toward her book and wanted to be quit of it. That is its principal fault, and one which is evident in many a first novel.

MISS ISABELLA HOLT.

"The Marriotts and the Powells" is a story of a conglomerate family group of Chicagoans. It is told simply, with sophistication, with kindliness, with a point of view, and with mental leisure. It is not a negligible novel. Miss Holt has a literary future.

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SOCIETY AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Wedding To-Day of Miss Isabella Holt and Haldeman Finnie.

BY HELEN WETHRELL.

Standing with the dignity of age among the modern residences in Lake Forest is the attractive, rambling Holt homestead that was built before the civil war. It has sheltered three generations of Holts. Its rich store of memories will be enhanced when relatives and friends gather late this afternoon at a reception following the wedding of Miss Isabella Holt, daughter of Mrs. Charles S. Holt of Bellevue place, to Haldeman Finnie of Detroit at 4 o'clock at the Lake Forest Presbyterian church.

Miss Marian Holt, a sister, is maid of honor, and the bridesmaids are Mrs. E. B. Rafter of Washington, Miss Dorothy Keeley, whose engagement to Granham Aldis has been announced, and Miss Elizabeth Farwell, who is engaged to Aime Millet; Miss Janet Pauling, and a sister-in-law, Mrs. C. McPherson Holt. The maid of honor wears a gown of shell pink chiffon and the bridesmaids dress in chiffon of a deeper shade of pink. All wear sand-colored hats, stockings and slippers and carry spring flowers. Little Fannie McPherson, a niece of the bride, who is flower girl, also has a dainty frock of pink. The wedding dress, a Paris confection, is of white satin with a long train. The dress, with the exception of the train, is of lace woven with silver thread, and the veil is caught with orange blossoms. A shower bouquet is carried.

Norman H. Preble of Detroit acts as best man and the ushers are Charles B. Phelps of Detroit, Philip O. Mulkey of Detroit, Berrien C. Eaton of Detroit, David Hunting of Grand Rapids, Donald F. McPherson and C. McPherson Holt.

The bride's first novel was published about Christmas time. It had a ready sale among her many friends and those who had associations with the Holt family, but instead of dropping after its reception, has kept on winning appreciation.

A CHARMING BRIDE OF LAKE FOREST.

MISS ISABELLA HOLT, DAUGHTER OF MRS. CHARLES S. HOLT WHOSE MARRIAGE TO HALDEMAN FINNIE OF LAKE FOREST TAKES PLACE THIS AFTERNOON.

[By Moffett.]

TWO WEDDINGS ON NORTH SHORE DRAW SOCIETY

Miss Thompson and Miss Holt Are Brides.

Society journeyed to the north shore yesterday afternoon for two weddings, one in Lake Forest and the other in Winnetka.

Miss Isabella Holt, daughter of Mrs. Charles S. Holt of 38 Bellevue place, was married to Haldeman Finnie of Detroit at 4 o'clock in the Lake Forest Presbyterian church. The church was decorated with Easter lilies and lighted tapers. The Rev. George Roberts read the service. The bride, one of the best known young women in society, not only as an artist and a novelist, but as a former president of the Junior league, wore a gown of rose point lace with a court train of white satin. Her tulle veil was held in place with a wreath of orange blossoms. She carried white lilies.

Attendants in Coral Chiffon.

The attendants, Miss Marion Holt, sister of the bride, Miss Dorothy Keeley, Miss Elizabeth Farwell, Miss Janet Pauling and Mrs. Case B. Raster of Washington, D. C., wore coral and flame chiffon gowns with beige horsehair hats. They carried bouquets of tulips.

Mr. and Mrs. Finnie will be at home after June 1 at 2176 Field avenue, Detroit. The wedding reception was held at the residence of the bride's aunt, Miss Ellen Holt, in Lake Forest.

When Miss [illegible]

FRANK L. SMITH TO QUIT LUNDIN, CAPITAL REPORT

Won't Head Commission, Politicians Hear.

BY E. O. PHILLIPS.

Springfield, Ill., April 22.—[Special.]—The resignation of Frank L. Smith as chairman of the Illinois commerce commission and a definite break between Col. Smith's downstate friends and the Chicago city hall machine appear to be a practical certainty in Illinois Republican politics.

When he quits—as his best friends and advisers say that he will—it is probable that Col. Smith will become a candidate for the Republican nomination for governor in the April primaries of 1924.

All of the developments yesterday in the Republican state convention led to [illegible] that the Small

THE MARRIOTTS AND THE POWELLS

A TRIBAL CHRONICLE

BY

ISABELLA HOLT

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Isabella Holt's Novel of Chicago.

THE MARRIOTTS AND THE POWELLS. By Isabella Holt. Macmillan.

A STORY of Chicago, without a word about the stockyards, the board of trade or the housing problem; without a reference to the smoke nuisance, traction difficulties or a corrupt political machine; and yet, unmistakably, a Chicago story because the characters are unmistakably Chicago people—a definite if somewhat limited group of Chicagoans who live on, or near, the Lake Shore drive in winter and spend their summers in Lake Forest.

It is the chronicle of their social, in-

By THE M

Set up and printe

Pr
J. J. Little &
New York

and a girl with the tendencies of their father, Vesey Powell, a shifty financier with an inexhaustible fund of misplaced optimism, a disarming knowledge of his own frailties and an utter lack of what are generally known as the "finer sensibilities."

The Marriotts had money. The Powells, as might be expected from even this brief summary of Vesey's peculiarities, had none (or only so much as was provided from time to time by Uncle Edgar and Uncle Tolman Marriott), and teetered continuously on the edge of bankruptcy and disgrace, supplying the plot with an element of uncertainty it would otherwise lack.

The story begins on Memorial day, 1905, with the entire cast of characters gathered on the red-carpeted front steps of old Joshua Marriott's mansion in Michigan boulevard, near 18th street, to watch Uncle Joshua march in the parade, and to partake of strawberry ice cream and coconut cake. From his armchair on the porch Edgar Marriott, broken in health and ambition and given to reading, philosophizing and interesting himself in the lives of his young relatives, watches the next generation of Marriotts and Powells on the steps. From that time on the story grows with the development of these children into men and women, a development in which Uncle Edgar plays so kindly and shrewd a part that for almost the first time since Peter Pan we do believe in fairies—fairy godfathers, at least. It amuses him to imagine himself playing at chess with the Almighty, using his son and nephews and nieces as chessmen. He tries to teach them to be "honest, generous, brave and loyal," and succeeds so well that, though "Di lacked courage, Mat lacked honesty and Fan failed once in loyalty," they are a marked and shining contrast to most of the young folks one reads about to-day in that they are, on the whole, happy, useful and sane members of society. Like all those who

THE MARRIOTTS
AND
THE POWELLS

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PART I

I

THE good Rhoda, who had been so long a fixture in Joshua Marriott's household as to have identified herself with its tradition,—and to whom indeed might have been traced some of its characteristic peculiarities,—was a little early with her tray of refreshments; and while waiting for the end of the parade to pass, she amused herself by eyeing through the screen door certain previously unconsidered offshoots of the family stock who now shared, as to the manner born, the honors of the porch and steps with the authentic Marriotts. It is much to ask of an elderly Irish woman that she should in one hour enlarge her feudal allegiance to twice its capacity; but Joshua had bade her attend on the Powells as his kinsfolk, and she was well-disposed.

It was Decoration Day in 1905.

Tolman Marriott and his wife and children had been accustomed for years to driving over and making a family ceremony of the day, so that all its details had a ritual validity; they had anticipated the usual afternoon passed on the front steps, watching the parade, the usual crowds below, the usual ice-cream, and the usual well-being not very different from lethargy. The introduction into the circle of a handful of unknown cousins, however, had disturbed the unity of the current of feeling: and though the adult generation had by the middle of the afternoon established easy relations between their rocking-chairs, among the children on the steps below, the discerning eye could still separate two trends of energy.

Joshua Marriott's house on Michigan Avenue was a landmark pointed out by the megaphonic young men who conducted sight-seeing trips around Chicago, though its architecture had become a trifle demoded of late years. It stood on its own lawns, darkly florid with bastions, crenellations, turrets and stained-glass windows; it was built of gray rusticated masonry, and the porch was masked by low-browed Romanesque arches. To-day the staff extended from a third-story window, and Joshua himself had hung out the vast flag, which now swayed across the façade. A red rug spread upon the steps was scattered with Joshua Marriott's grandchildren, grandnephews and nieces; and in the shadowed porch was gathered a middle-aged group, whose high-light was formed by the white waistcoat and the watch-chain of Tolman Marriott.

This excellent man stood with his legs apart, jingling the loose coin in his pockets, and listening with absent good-nature to the business conversation of F. Vesey Powell. The group suggested to Tolman's brother Edgar, who had formed through invalid years the habit of looking acutely at the world from an easy-chair, the colloquy of a mastiff and a weasel.

Not to put too fine a point on a fact, the Powells were the Marriotts' poor relations; and their very anatomy proclaimed as much, suggesting but slight acquaintance with the eggs, the beefsteak and the yellow cream upon which the broad bones and fresh ruddy faces of the Marriotts were as obviously sustained.

"Where are you going to school?" Josie Marriott asked abruptly of Diantha Powell. Josie was fourteen while Diantha was twelve, but she had the assurance of twenty additional years; and her disposition was not at its best, as she had lately vowed herself to a process called "banting," resolving to persevere while one ounce of superfluous flesh could be detected upon her frame, though the clink-

ing of china indoors was a sore trial to her still unsubdued appetite.

"Nowhere this summer," Diantha made answer in a frightened New England voice, "but in September I suppose we shall start in at the public school."

"Oh!" said Josie to Hélène. "The public school!" and after looking Diantha up and down from her narrow brown shoes,—scuffed at the toes,—to her pigtails, she turned her shoulder to the world and resumed conversation with her most intimate friend. Hélène was not entitled by birth to share the Marriott festivities, but both she and Josie would have felt a separation for the afternoon too keenly, so she had come along.

For one moment Diantha was left blushing, before her brother Mat came to the rescue. If Josie was older than Diantha, he was likewise a year Josie's senior; and being a Liberal by temperament, he had chosen to express his independence of wealth and rank by adopting for the day an unlovely defiant air and a voice needlessly loud and flat.

"Where do *you* go?" he now fired at Josie.

"Oh, I'm at Miss Whipple's; but of course you couldn't go there, because you're a boy: and I don't know,"—with another slow look at Diantha's attire,—"I'm not sure Diantha would care about it either."

Hélène hereupon nudged Josie, and the two went off into a cadenza of half-stifled gigglings.

"When Diantha goes to a private school," said Mat, fairly stumbling over his words in his fury, "I shall make sure she goes to one where there are *ladies!*" And though the phrase did not satisfy him, he had at least voiced a protest.

From his lounge-chair, Edgar Marriott looked down on the restless group. He had thought Mat his father's image at first sight:—the same long, egg-like contours of skull and face, the same slyness about the lips. But

as he stood now, with his jaw thrust out, his hair bristling rather than ruffling in the wind, his brows knotted, and his green eyes snapping sparks, he gave Edgar a sudden hope for Vesey Powell's children by showing that they were also Amy's, and had Marriott blood in their veins.

Not Edgar alone, who watched from philosophic curiosity, stopped talking to follow the development of the minute scene; by common understanding, Mrs. Tolman Marriott and her married daughter Christine, lately promoted from the rug to a rocking-chair, looked first at the children and then at each other.

It was Fanning, Daisy Marriott's young god, her only son, who with three words and a laugh controlled the situation.

"What's the odds?" said Fanning, glancing from his sister to Mat, both of whom looked abashed, "I've known heaps of fellows who went to the public school, and they all say it's great. What's the use talking about schools anyway? Here we are at the first of June. Why gloom?"

It was Fanning's nature to take the center of the stage, and no one disputed him now. He was fifteen, a mature age to those most concerned, and he seemed less callow and clumsy than his coeval, Mat. While Mat with one half of his brain was calling Fan a "patronizing young ass," and with the other thanking him for a release from a crude broil, Diantha, more susceptible, turned upon this kindest, most tactful of cousins two dark-gray orbs which obliterated the rest of her face, and recognized him for her divinity. His dark eyes laughed at the world, and his features were still softened with the curves and the peach-coloring of boyhood. His hair was a vivacious, warm brown, his teeth were straight and radiantly white.

He was kind . . . ineffably kind, in an overwhelming world . . .

"I say, Eddie," said he, "has something happened to the provisions?"

"You wait and see," replied Eddie sardonically. "Perhaps there won't be any this year."

The question had been asked of him because he, with Edgar his father, lived in his grandfather's house; and he had replied rudely because Fan was handsome and he was ugly, Fan was civil and he was morose, because everybody liked Fan and no one could get along with him.

But questions and answers were superseded by the appearance of Rhoda with her tray; and the Olympians on the porch were served to strawberry ice-cream and cocoanut layer-cake.

Surging throngs along the curb, whose ancestors had not taken passage on the *Mayflower*, and who were jostling one another as they directed themselves toward the nearest glass of beer, and pushing past the vendors of canes, pennants and popcorn, looked up with frank interest at the unusual sight,—legacy from a simpler age,—of a well-to-do family eating ice-cream in public on the front steps.

When Rhoda had served Mrs. Tolman Marriott, Mrs. Vesey Powell,—who accepted with a deprecatory, unfashionable smile,—and Christine Herron whom she was loath to admit into the category of the adult, she approached Tolman Marriott and Vesey Powell.

"No, thanks, Rhoda," said the financier.

"Thank you, no," murmured Vesey, parrot-like.

"Come along, Tolman," said a vibrant voice from the lounge-chair, "it's only once a year, you know, and when Father gets back he'll ask if you scraped your plate."

Tolman smiled at his brother, threw his cigar over the balustrade, and partook of the refreshments, whereupon Vesey likewise changed his mind.

Adeline Marriott and her *fiancé* Ernest Conrad were not admitted to rocking-chairs, but they vindicated their dignity by sitting, nose to nose, at the extreme top of the steps.

"Come up, children, so Rhoda won't have to go so far," called Amy Powell to her brood.

"Sure I'd as soon go down as thim come up and bust all the best china," said Rhoda, lumbering on her way.

Among the younger generation there was no coyness in the face of nourishment. The silver rattled busily. Diantha sat with her spoon in her mouth and her eyes resting in perfect unconsciousness upon Fanning as he ate; and in her ears sounded the nerve-exalting strains of two departing bands playing against each other. She was reliving the most stupendous moments of this dazzling day,—the Governor on horseback, Great-Uncle Joshua, in uniform and soft-toed boots, marching to sound of fife and drum with the Grand Army of the Republic. The great flag above moved rhythmically, throwing shadow and light across them. In the warm afternoon all sounds were merged into a dreamlike murmur, —scuffle and chatter of crowds, clink of spoons, the remembered tramping of soldiers' feet . . .

On this revery broke her mother's distracted voice. "Diantha, do see to Herby!" Up to this time the third and youngest of the Powells had been too dazed to do more than blink at the world over his fat cheeks; but with the advent of the plate he had become active. The ice-cream was hard, and he had already hounded it by a series of frontal thrusts of his spoon to the very rim of the dish. One last lunge drove plate and dainty from his grasp, and sent them hurtling down the steps. The plate fell into three pieces, but the ice-cream launched itself through space and landed squarely on Hélène's muslin knees.

Herby set up a baffled howl.

"Oh, my Lord!" said Josie.

"Shut up, Jo," Fan admonished her. "It's not your funeral."

Diantha scrambled with a spoon and a handkerchief toward the outraged Hélène, while Amy fluttered down

like some anguished fowl among the wreckage. Mat hated, at this moment, both his little brother who had spilled the food, and his ineffectual mother and sister.

Cousin Edgar alone among those present enjoyed the scene, as it showed him characters in action; his hobby was watching his fellow-beings, and to-day he was cataloguing these descendants of his Uncle Ezra Marriott.

The Marriott sisters, exclaiming their indignation, withdrew Hélène to a bathroom upstairs,—a bathroom rich with hand-painted plumbing chosen by Joshua's wife Lucinda at about the same time she bought her famous diamond eardrops. Amy Powell, escorted by Diantha, removed her disgraced offspring to the downstairs washroom to cleanse and chastise him. The whole party scattered about the house.

The older men in the billiard-room talked about Admiral Togo's trouncing of Rodjesvensky, and agreed with one another that the Japanese were a wonderful little people. Edgar gave utterance to prophecies about a new Golden Age in Russia, to which Tolman listened with an affectionate smile. The two brothers liked one another thoroughly, though they had differed on every conceivable topic since they were boys. As for Vesey Powell, without premeditation they armored themselves for mutual defense against his intrusion into the conversation; but he was in no wise abashed, and persevered in trying to pick up hints on the state of the Far Eastern markets.

Ernest Conrad lingered in the hall, determined to be entrapped into no social group for the rest of the afternoon. He felt that he and his *fiancée* had given full measure to their relatives that day, and as soon as Adeline came downstairs he intended to withdraw her into the conservatory.

The three boys were soon clattering up to the third story, where Eddie's treasures, of which a new turning-lathe with electrical connections was just then the most renowned, made havoc of what had been the ballroom.

Mrs. Marriott and Christine were left to an intimate gossip on the porch. The afternoon was really warm, and the rocking-chairs squeaked like drowsy crickets; the flag drifted lazily back and forth.

Christine, little as her mother realized it, was far away on a golf-course watching her husband making long drives. He, Luke, had flatly refused to join "Grandpa's patriotic rally," and if she had had the courage she would have stayed away too. But, once having arrived, it was pleasanter to chat with Daisy, who recognized her as a woman of the world, than to wander among lanky fledgling cousins.

"*Where* did we find them, darling?" she asked.

"Christine," said her mother, "I may have personal failings, they say everybody has; but at least I can look you all in the face and swear that I have no relatives to inflict on your father comparable to those he inflicts on me."

"Just who are they?"

"Well, this Amy is the daughter of your grandfather's brother Ezra."

"She's not so bad; it's her husband."

"My dear, it was a runaway match. Heaven knows where she found him. Tolman's sent them checks every Christmas for years. But it does annoy me, I admit, to have them come and camp at our back door."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you hear Vesey Powell say when Edgar introduced him, 'Well, Cousin, I understand you're near neighbors of *ours*'? They've taken one of those buggy little houses on Hickory Place right around the corner from the Drive, and not half a block from our service entrance."

"That *is* cool. Do you suppose they knew where we lived?"

"Knew, my child? Knew? Why else did they come to Chicago? Mark my words, Vesey Powell is going to get his living out of us. He's as slippery as an eel, you can

see it in his eye. I suppose I ought not to mind, your father can afford it well enough; but you know I hate to be imposed on."

"Do you mean they just moved out here to be near us?"

"Tolman says he isn't in any one business more than another. He promotes various fly-by-night companies. But why doesn't he stay in his home town, where he's known, unless he made it too hot to hold him? I say there's just one reason; he's camping on the trail of his wife's relatives. He knows we can't let them go naked and starving around our own block."

"How do you suppose his wife takes it? She seems rather sweet."

"Sweet, yes. I pity the poor woman from my heart. But she doesn't look as if she had an atom of spirit."

"It's funny she ever came to run away," said Christine, with the rich consciousness of a church wedding, six bridesmaids and five hundred presents, a year withdrawn into the background of her past.

"I haven't had a chance to ask your father about her yet. He used to visit her family in Springfield while he was at New Haven. You know I never set eyes on them till we walked in and found them to-day. Your grandfather was beaming. 'Brother Ezra's girl'—he called her; I didn't find out her name till I cornered Tolman in the back parlor for a minute."

"As you say," said Christine consolingly, "if money is what they want, Father can perfectly well part with a little. And they won't expect anything else."

"I'm not so sure," said Daisy, rocking herself with an agitated toe. "You'll call me a fool to my face, Christine, and say I'm borrowing trouble; but I have a presentiment that Vesey Powell won't rest easy till he's married that little girl off to Fanning."

"Oh, Mother, Mother, Mother!"

"Laugh on, my darling: odder things have happened."

"But it's unthinkable. Fanning—why, he's a regular ladies' man already; all the little girls at dancing-school are mad about him, I hear; he'll have a chance to know the most attractive people in America.

"Boys don't marry the most attractive girls in America, my dear; they marry girls who are thrown at their heads. I'm speaking about boys with money."

"Thank goodness Luke is poor."

"Your father says Luke's an excellent business man." (Christine radiated joy; Luke was her obsession.)

"The only thing for you to do, Mother, is to throw somebody else at Fan's head."

"I suppose you're joking; but it's good sound advice, and it's what every sensible mother ought to do. I don't say this because I'm prejudiced, Christine. I just say what everybody will admit—that Fan is a remarkable boy, and the very best in the world is none too good for him."

"Dearest Mother," said Christine, laughing indulgently. "That's the principle you brought us all up on, and I hope you'll never waver in it."

"I thank the Lord for my children," said Daisy, sincerely. "You've all been a great comfort to me."

"I must say, I don't think Jo-Jo's any ornament to the family tree just at present. She's downright disagreeable, and she was as rude as could be at lunch. And who's that dreadful little Hélène she runs with?"

"She'll outgrow all that. You may have forgotten that you and Adeline were twice as unattractive the year before you went away to school. Perhaps you don't recall that you intended to leave home and go on the stage?"

"That's perfectly true," said Christine, with another of her frank laughs. "You'll make a lady out of Josie somehow. She's got a good start physically. I couldn't help realizing it when I looked down and compared her with the Powells."

"The poor little things probably don't get enough to

eat. And their clothes don't look as if they kept them warm. I'm going to send a lot of old things over to Amy; she'll be able to use them."

"Poor Dianth How I'd have suffered when I was her age, if I'd had to go out looking like a holy show!"

"Well, they don't realize it the way you would. I don't imagine they've associated with many well-dressed people."

"Don't you suppose *she* had respectable friends back East?"

"Oh, very likely; but you know how those old New England families are; the ones that have no ambition stay in the original house and live on their ancestors' credit; and the ones who amount to something run away from home, just as your grandfather did, and make money out West. Probably Amy's friends are nothing so remarkable."

Mrs. Marriott undervalued the blood of the Pilgrim Fathers, having dispensed with it quite comfortably. Her father, Ricky Pellew, had enjoyed one of those meteoric speculative flights which come out of the obscure and circle into the inane; and from the crest of his arc she had detached herself, and soared on an independent wing as Tolman Marriott's wife. Pellew had had the grace to die before the crash, and it is true that he had left his child free from encumbering family connections. She had freely given her loyalty to the Marriott tradition, as represented by the prosperous and respectable Chicago Marriotts; but it was another matter extending it to cover down-at-the-heel collateral branches.

Further discussion was blocked by Amy's reappearance on the porch with her chastened small son, whose chunky frame had settled into itself protectively, like the turtle's, to resist a period of adversity. He gave large sidelong looks at the unsympathetic adults who, after their manner, blamed little boys for spilling ice-cream just as if they had meant to do it, instead of being victimized by

malign natural forces. Herby's rosy lower lip was thrust outward in a pout which, as a good stoic, he prevented from developing toward tears.

Behind Amy's skirts Diantha came creeping. She was afraid of the large hall they had just traversed, which was full of black bronze beasts from the Orient, and lit only by the strangled colorings of the stained-glass window on the landing, and in one corner of which towered the ecclesiastical tubing of a pipe-organ.

Herby was taken into his mother's lap, as she murmured conversation to Daisy; Diantha isolated herself at the bottom of the steps, and put her thumb in her mouth while collecting her forces. Too many new impressions had made impact on her consciousness, both of pleasure and pain. In the first place, Chicago was still a strange city to her, and the furniture sat in packing-cases about their house. There had been a long ride on the street-cars, with a change downtown and a walk through uproarious streets, where a wind had rushed out and blown her hat off her head.

Then they had arrived at Great-Uncle Joshua's house, and for once Mat and Diantha were agreed that their father had not exaggerated. It was a castle, standing on its own lawns, and marked for the size and cleanliness of its flag from all the neighboring houses. Uncle Joshua had met them on the porch,—which he called the "stoop", —and kissed them all, patting Amy's arm and turning her around to look at her. He was dressed in his uniform, with two medals.

Of the other relatives they had met, Diantha had differentiated only two,—Josie and Fan. She was not a rancorous little girl, nor self-assertive, but she dumbly recognized Josie's unfriendliness. As for Fan, how could she help knowing him? As far as the august elders went, her young lady cousins would have been piqued to learn that she had confused them with their mother, and re-

garded herself as the possessor of an indefinite number of new aunt-like relations.

The house, also, was without form and void to her. She supposed it to contain almost any number of dark, cavernous apartments, all studded with bric-à-brac which one must take care not to touch. That it should have a ground-plan and limits was not among her conceptions.

Of the parade we have spoken; but there are no words new and trenchant enough to express Diantha's feelings. When for the first time she heard the drums roll out their long, heart-stirring thunder, leading up to the crash of the brasses, she wanted to die for her country—at once, magnificently! The troops had passed, and one thrill after another had shuddered along her nervous system from its center to its extremities.

"He is sounding forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat,
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat.
Be swift, my soul, to answer him, be jubilant my feet—
Our God is marching on!"

It was a quaint little parade: a handful of militia, two or three companies of the regular cavalry, and a few cadets, followed by civilian fraternal orders in business suits, with canes over their shoulders. But Diantha saw her country marching; she heard it shouting the battle-cry of freedom; and her spirit was exalted.

To these ennobling sensations had succeeded the crudities of Josie and Mat, the intercession of the adorable Fan, and with Herby's débâcle, the ghastly nerve-strain of standing by while his hands were slapped and forming her first independent judgment of her mother. She had long known that her father was liable to human error; but on that day Amy had knocked down the first stone

of her own pedestal, which, falling, made a deep bruise on her daughter's soul. Herby, be it said, had quickly forgiven his mother, whose conduct was no more inexplicable to him than everything else in the world.

Edgar came out on the porch, leaning on his cane.

"It's time Father was home," he said. "I'm always nervous for fear he'll have a sunstroke before he gets back. But it's the breath of life to him."

"Sit down, Edgar; worrying won't bring him."

"True and well put, Sister Daisy." Edgar settled down in his wicker lounge-chair, and fell into reflection. With health and career both wrecked, it was his principal pastime. His new cousins gave him a cud to chew, and he revolved the mystery of personality, which with its roots in the same race and line, and its stalks feeding on the same air, puts forth clusters of flowers of the most inexplicable differentiation. "One of God's hobbies," he thought. He was wont to regard God without reverence, as a quick-witted opponent with whom one played chess during the term of one's life, more for the sake of the game than for any practical purpose. Edgar subscribed to the heresy more lately formulated for the masses by Wells, and felt, even if he did not believe, that there was some obscure force greater for good than God himself,—God who had shown himself inexpert in the handling of Edgar's life,—and that for the sake of this greater good, mankind might well ally itself to a deity who generally needed helping out of a tight place.

Meanwhile Joshua Marriott came along the sidewalk, bringing two old friends back for a taste of the ice-cream. They moved slowly, painfully, with childlike enjoyment on their faces. They turned in through the iron gateway, and when Diantha raised her eyes they stood before her.

She sprang up: her hands flew to her throat, which was choked with worship. They smiled at her, and limped up the steps. Diantha stood one moment transfixed, and

then fled rapidly up into the house to be alone with herself; she rushed into the farthest drawing-room, and there stood trembling among the huge Cloisonné jars.

Edgar had seen her pass, and he had seen the unquiet radiance of her face. As soon as Joshua, with Captain Toody and Major Dowden, had been welcomed and seated, and Rhoda had brought them food, he went in search of her. His faint step came toward her through arched doorways; she hid herself behind a vase as he pursued: the next thing she knew, she was sitting on his knee, her face buried in his shoulder; gusts of noiseless sobbing were shaking her small ribs; and his metallic voice was soothing her—"There, child! There, there, you dear little thing! Cry away to your heart's content!"

He asked no questions. He mopped her tears with a huge, soft handkerchief. They sat for perhaps ten minutes, till she re-established her composure: then she gave him a shame-faced smile, and he placed her more conventionally on the sofa beside him.

"It *has* been a big day, hasn't it?" he asked. "How old are you?"

"Twelve."

"I'm more than three times as old as you are. I'll be forty next spring."

"Mamma's forty-one."

"What are you going to be like when you're forty?"

Her answering smile was roguish, recognizing the delicate absurdity of the idea that she might ever become forty.

"I shall have seven children," she said, adding with a touch of bitterness, "and I shall feed them ice-cream with my *own hands*."

"Yes, we do make mistakes," he replied. "You have to learn to overlook them. That's what's called Education for Life."

Was he simply talking nonsense as grown-ups generally

did, or had he a meaning? Her mind made a slight stretching motion, then sank back. Twelve-year-olds do not develop through the contemplation of abstract nouns.

"What's your husband going to be like?" inquired Cousin Edgar.

"He's going to be the Governor of Massachusetts"—glibly; then suddenly she checked herself, seeing that if she went on she might reveal the secret of his identity. He was to be Fanning, or else his replica.

"Public life, eh? I suppose you'd like to ride in a victoria, and wear tossing ostrich-feathers on your hat."

This was a close hit. Her face confessed it, and Cousin Edgar chuckled.

"Come on and talk to your great-uncle," he said. "Pull me up," and he let her hoist him to his feet by hauling at his thin hand.

Before the party dispersed, Joshua assembled them all in the front parlor, where hung the portrait of his wife Lucinda, with her square jaw and her diamond eardrops —(these latter ornaments having been the first of any great size in Chicago, and so much too precious to leave at home, that they were provided with onyx masks or cases, so that they could be worn during the day without dazzling the world). He looked earnestly into the faces of his grandchildren, one after another, and they stared back at him. He had a blunt beard and a smooth upper lip, and under his white brows his eyes were blue like a child's, and had in them something of the baffled wistfulness of a child's.

He made a little patriotic speech, and asked them all to hand on the country to their children as they had received it in trust from their fathers. He spoke of the friends of his young manhood, who had given their lives to the nation. He told them that each of them as a citizen would have a debt to pay . . .

Josie and Hélène giggled throughout this ceremony;

Adeline held Ernest's hand; Eddie blushed for his grandfather, whom he found oversentimental; the newcomers were the only ones much impressed.

When the farewells came to be performed, Cousin Edgar drew Diantha to one side.

"I want to see you often, you know. We're going to be great friends."

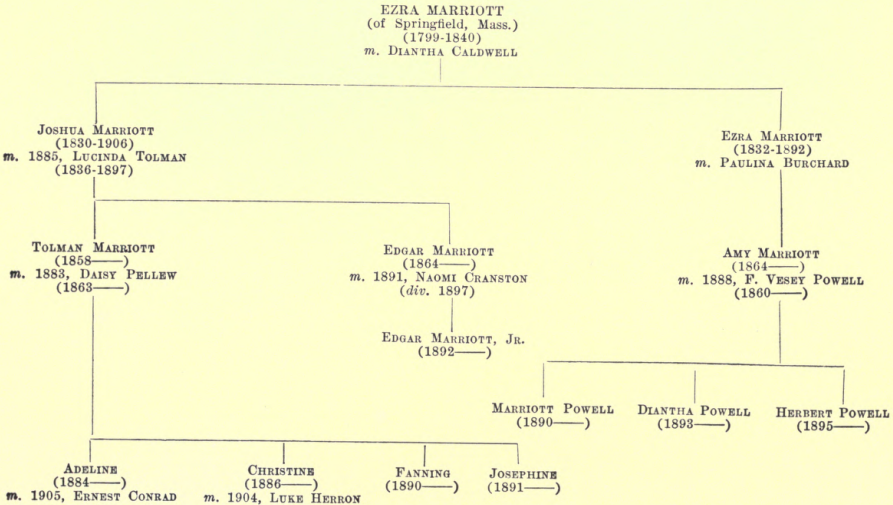
She nodded mysteriously, and proffered one of the smiles which little girls forget how to give when they grow up.

"Mind, you've promised. I can't go over to see you very well. So you must come here the first chance you get."

For the second time she nodded, and shook hands with him in a manly, straightforward fashion.

The Marriotts drove home in their superb imported automobile, of almost twelve horse-power, which left clouds of oily smoke wherever it passed. They regretted that they had no seats to offer the Powells, who regretted it at least as much, and who made their way home as best they could by the aid of the surface lines.

THE MARRIOTTS AND THE POWELLS IN 1905



II

Not too late of an afternoon, F. Vesey Powell would walk home from the office, to help Amy settle the house on Hickory Place. He was a tall man, and there was a feline swing to his gait, not ungraceful. The children used to watch for him to round the corner of Cousin Tolman's house on the Drive, and then Herby would rush to let him in. Herby, as has been said, was still too young to form moral judgments on adults; and, measuring life's gifts by the pleasure or pain they produced in himself, he knew no higher bliss than to be jounced and thrown about by Papa's arms, and tickled by Papa's fingers.

This afternoon—one of the long June days—Papa was reported to have a package, so he was welcomed with more particularity than usual.

"What do you guess, kiddies?" he said, holding it high above their aspiring arms.

They guessed a variety of things. Amy, who was on her knees before an ancient if not honorable armchair, with her mouth full of tacks, looked apprehensive. It ought to be shoes, or rather, considering the family exchequer, it ought to be nothing at all.

"Little rabbits," said Herby.

"Nonsense. This is a really good present. Something to make you healthy and happy, and establish your place in society. You see it's quite a large package."

The long and short of it was—roller skates! Leaving the children to scramble over the parcel, Vesey went across to kiss his wife. She received his salute on the cheek with absolute unconcern.

"Was that very wise?" she murmured through the tacks.

He shrugged his shoulders and beamed down at her. "Penny-wise little woman! I had a motive. I'll tell you later. Must wash now."

He whistled his way upstairs, and splashed merrily in the bath-room. Amy went on tacking, while the children wrestled with the straps and buckles and screws of the skates.

The house discouraged her. It was the smallest they had ever had, and there was no room for the children to play except in the street, so that when the weather was bad they smashed a good deal of furniture, and developed tempers in themselves and in her. The furniture was a depressing sight at the best of times, having been collected during the past fifteen or twenty years, when necessity commanded, and having withstood several May movings. A few good old pieces had come to her when her father's home was broken up, but they had endured much. They sat dejected among plush patent rockers with broken springs, bead-fringed lamp-shades which were going through a molting process, tables ornamented with the scroll-saw, bureaux on three casters and chairs on three legs. The family had preferred not to spend the money their landlord allowed them for decoration, and they followed a tenant destitute of taste. The drawing-room was of the smallest dimensions, but it was papered in a vigorous wild-rose design, with unfaded patches where their predecessor's pictures had hung. There was a little fireplace; and with a fresh, simple paper, white paint, and clean curtains, Amy knew she could have made the place cosy; but even the petty sums which such decoration would take were pledged to uses more fundamental.

Back of this room was a narrow, dark dining-room extending the full width of the house,—some sixteen feet,—with the stairs running out of it. Behind that were a kitchen and a most uninviting pantry. Whether or not, to quote Mrs. Tolman, the house was buggy, it was un-

deniably mousy, and damp, and completely screened from all but the most insinuating sunshine.

Vesey came down brimming with inventiveness and good humor, knocked the children out of his way right and left, took the tack-hammer from his wife's hand, and bade her spit out the tacks she was eating. In three minutes he finished upholstering the sofa and the chairs; then he put up a bracket for the telephone; did a little amateur plumbing to the kitchen range, and inserted a new washer in one of the faucets; and then he and Mat laid the stair-carpet, ingeniously adapting the worn spots to the dark corners.

"Well!" said Vesey, sitting back on his heels. "Who says we haven't a jolly little home already? The next money we get, we'll buy a canary and a goldfish."

Herby's face expressed lively satisfaction. He was wearing his roller-skates, but finding that with the slightest movement he precipitated himself to the floor, he judged it best to hold firmly to the newel-post and watch his father and brother.

"Diantha!" called Amy from the kitchen. "Won't you come and help mamma with the supper?"

Diantha at that moment was cautiously poking out her feet, one after the other, along the front sidewalk.

"Heedless child!" murmured her mother, returning to the frying-pan to give the potatoes a turn before setting the dining-table.

Diantha's head was down, her arms were waving wildly on either side, as she worked her way along. All at once she found herself in collision with a broad waistcoat.

"Mind where you're going, there," said the gentleman, not unkindly, detaching himself from her and hurrying on.

She looked after him. It was Cousin Tolman, and he turned briskly into his own Caen-stone Renaissance doorway.

By the time she had skated home, the family had been for some time seated at supper.

"The idea is this, it's very logical," her father was saying, buttering his biscuit and biting generously into it. "Since they can't play in the house, they must play in the street. Now only little hoodlums play in the street; but the very nicest children skate in the street, because they can't skate anywhere else. And anybody can see that skating is good exercise: imparts grace to the limbs; promotes circulation; works off steam. Let them skate. They'll get acquainted with all the rich families around here, the way children do. And then it will be bound to throw them in their cousins' way—keep them in mind of us, don't you know."

Vesey had early in life developed a meretricious frankness which he used to save the trouble of hypocrisy. He did not mind being heard to discourse in this vein by his children, because he knew well that they had already judged him. He thought he was teaching them worldly wisdom.

"Of course," said Mat, "everybody with the money to do it, leaves town before now. I have no idea of flinging myself in front of the Tolman Marriotts, but I'll just point out that they are all in Lake Forest anyway."

"No, they aren't," said Diantha, "I skated into Cousin Tolman just now."

"You see," said Vesey triumphantly to Amy; and then to Diantha, "What did he say?"

"Oh, he didn't know me," said Diantha. "We got out of each other's way, and he went into his house."

"Mmm," articulated Vesey. "These things ought not so to be, my brethren. . . . Well! time will adjust that . . . Most superior biscuits, dearest."

Vesey often prided himself on his attentiveness to his wife, and sometimes wondered that she showed so little appreciation of it. She took his kindness as passively as though it were the weather. Once or twice he had wished

that before marrying him she had been the widow of someone who had ill-used her, so that she might set a more proper value on her domestic happiness.

After the washing of the dishes, the three children skated earnestly till dark. Their father sat on the steps to watch them, and Amy joined him with her darning-basket. "Jolly little beggars!" he said fondly.

Once Amy put down her sock, and held her needle motionless, while she gazed at her husband as if trying to fathom him. Could he really think that three pairs of roller-skates were the equivalent of a career of business honesty?

In many ways Vesey overreached himself. He threw all his zeal into shady transactions in which the greatest possible profit was not large, and the actual profit negligible. Long practice at launching doubtful schemes had given his manner a craftiness, a fictitious cordiality, which were obvious to any but the meanest intelligence, and which made reputable business men shun him at the first glance, as his cousins by marriage had instinctively done.

Now is perhaps as good a time as another for answering the question Amy's friends always asked of one another, —why she married him. In this matter a complete explanation is impossible, because at no time can F. Vesey Powell have given the impression of being a gentleman, and Amy was the purest type of New England gentlewoman. But there were other considerations.

Amy Marriott at sixteen, when her cousin Tolman knew her, had been pretty, arch, and rebellious. The New England atmosphere bored her, the New England beaux, at least as far as she extended her acquaintance among them, did not understand her. She liked to flirt with them, but feeling that she had a natural gift,—in a maidenly way, be it always said,—for this art, she felt also that her talent was wasted on such material. So she played at intellectual independence, talked of earning her

living as a church-singer in New York, pouted at her good father, and painted in water-color.

Her days glided by, in Springfield and its environs, and pretty Miss Marriott had reached the age of twenty-four, and declined the hands of some nineteen or twenty solid citizens, when not only she but her neighbors noticed a marked falling-off in the supply of suitors. As a matter of fact she had refused practically all the eligible young men of her circle, and to the few remaining her reputation was well enough known to make them unwilling to ride for a fall. Amy decided that spinsterhood had overtaken her and wished she had married some one of the nineteen, many of whom were now proving in homes of their own what excellent husbands they made. But when she thought back over the past, episode by episode, she could not see what she would have changed. None of her suitors had called on the great something within her breast, none had offered her the one opportunity for which she was born.

At this time a branch office was opened in town to sell mining stocks, which were urged upon the public in display advertising by that enterprising young financier, F. Vesey Powell of New York and Boston, who wore suits which the taste of that day pronounced faultless, and drove a trotter and a red-wheeled buggy. He did not approach the "regular aristocrats," as he somewhat crudely classified them—meaning the aristocrats who owned real money and knew how to take care of it; rather those who had small material support for their inner conviction of gentility. These he flattered and cajoled into parting with portions of their small patrimony, which were expected to multiply some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred-fold. Dividends came in almost as soon as subscribers had their stock—"only fourteen per cent for the first year or two."

Meanwhile, giddy with success, he had allowed himself to fall desperately and sincerely in love with the renowned man-eating Miss Marriott. He courted her skillfully,

learned her love of adventure,—never yet gratified,—her romanticism. He talked to her of the greater world in which she should move; her instinct corroborated him. She dreamt of him, looked for him—in short, fell in love with him.

There came a day when a committee of leading citizens waited on F. Vesey Powell and talked plain Anglo-Saxon English to him. They told him they assumed he was within the law, but that unless he left town at once they would look into his affairs and keep on looking till they found whether he was in reality or not.

Terrible hours succeeded for him. It so happened that he had broken no laws in Springfield, but an inquiry into his reason for leaving Michigan would have destroyed all his prestige as a financier. He never thought of giving Amy up unless she gave him up; and she should not learn from him why he was leaving so hastily. During the day he set his office in order, and carried away a valise full of papers. At dusk he went up to see Amy Marriott, and told her if she loved him she would come away with him to-night—otherwise she would never see him again. He told her nothing more, but played on her curiosity, her high spirit, her love . . .

They took the midnight train, and rode in the day-coach to Boston, where they were married. After this they traveled rapidly, and,—though Amy did not realize it,—secretly, about the country, apparently in no need of money. Although it is hard to admit such weaknesses after the glamor has faded, they were both during these weeks lyrically happy . . .

In due time Amy heard from home, and learned in part to know the man she had married. She was a high-minded girl, of God-fearing ancestry and scrupulous personal honesty; and she needed no more than one such blow to break her spirit. Vesey's lack of fineness was never better shown than in his willingness to go back and visit indefi-

nitely in the town from which he had been driven as a business man, and in which the details of his worthless mining venture were now but too thoroughly known.

For seventeen years Amy had been afforded opportunities to repent her marriage, in mass and detail. Vesey was not an unpleasant person to live with, as far as unessentials went, and, putting aside a few vagaries of disloyalty to which neither he nor she attached importance, he never lost his affection for his wife. But he had never yet paid a bill, except as a last resort. Amy never knew from day to day how much money she had to keep house on; and when they were in funds, she dreaded to learn their origin. To a woman whose inmost soul craved honesty, order and respectability, all this was a varied duration of torture.

As to the further question why she never left him, one is on surer ground. Problematical as that buoyancy and recklessness which had led her to elope seventeen years before may have appeared in 1905, there could remain no doubt in the observer's mind as to her present lack of spirit. Her first and only venture in directing her life had met with such signal ill-success as to check every manifestation of self-will; she had become a woman without courage, bending to misfortune rather than combating it, with a kind of goodness more like Patient Grisel's than Susan B. Anthony's; and since an all-wise Providence had inflicted Vesey Powell upon her, she made it her duty to submit.

Such ambition as she had was centered in her children. This evening as they staggered and gyrated along the sidewalk in the raspberry-colored glow, she looked from one to another of them, dreaming over their future with hope which she felt to be absurd. She did not care to have them rich, to her riches were confessed with chicanery. She wanted them to grow up honest and loyal, truth-telling, fair-dealing men and women, worthy of their race.

Diantha she had no fears for, but not being a feminist,

neither had she any ambitions. Girls, to her mind, were formed for domestic life, small adaptations and self-sacrifices, self-abnegating virtue. And there was a square solidity to Herby's chubby frame that reassured her pessimism. But Mat, her first-born, swung like a weather-vane between heredities. He was clever—cleverer than a Marriott had any right to be. His long arms and legs and neck, purely ugly at present, were after his father's pattern, and there were times when he had the same look. But in his cool green eye was a hard-headed twinkle with an edge to it—a look that was not deceived by shams, nor self-deceived by pleasantness. And as we have seen him once, so she saw him now and again, casting off the slippery Powell smile, with a brutal outthrust of the jaw, gratifyingly unlike Vesey.

"You know," said her husband, breaking in on his wife's revery, "it's time we went over to see the Tolman Marriotts."

"Oh, Vesey, I shouldn't like the looks of that. Mrs. Tolman ought to call here first."

"That's all very well, my dear; but suppose she doesn't get around to call before she moves to the country?"

"I don't know: she probably will come;—you know she spoke of sending over some old clothes of her children's."

"She may and she may not. It isn't as if we held the same hands. We have everything to gain from her acquaintance, but on my word I don't see what she gains from ours."

"All the more reason, then, for not forcing ourselves on her."

"All the more reason for establishing ourselves right in the bosom of the family, in the most natural way in the world, before anybody has had a chance to snub us."

"Oh, Vesey!"

"The same little theorist, Amy! You've got to take life as you find it—I get my amusement that way. Things don't always break right for me," he said with a trace of

Byronic bitterness, "but I sit back and watch human nature operate, and learn lessons that come in useful later, and add them in to the balance . . . Life's a great game, my girl,"—slapping his wife's knee; the sunset was working on his temperament;—"and we play it for great stakes. What were our heads put on our shoulders for, except to play the game with?"

It was seventeen years since he had begun talking the poetry of life's adventure to her, and she had grown familiar with the gamut of his lyre.

"Look facts in the face, Amy," he went on. "When we discussed moving to Chicago, didn't you think foremost of the advantage it would be to the children to form connections with their rich, respectable cousins?"

"In a way," conceded Amy. "One wants one's children to have the best chances and the best surroundings possible."

"But you want the chances to come to them, you're not willing to reach out toward the chances."

"I don't want to be unladylike."

"Of course you don't. But what is there unladylike between kinsfolk, in dropping in for a friendly visit?"

"Well . . ."

"If the Marriotts begin to accept a responsibility toward the children from the start, it will help us immensely, and it won't inconvenience them a particle. Whereas if you sit back, poor-but-proud, they'll let you sit there; and all the trouble and expense of moving out here will have been wasted—worse than wasted, because I've broken up all my business connections." He smiled with conscious sacrifice toward the rich West.

"What is it you'd advise?"

Vesey was never to be caught without an ingenious practical suggestion. "I say that next Sunday afternoon we all put on our best bibs and tuckers, and drop in on the Tolmans."

"The whole of us?"
"Every last one."
"I'll think it over . . ."
Vesey had won his move, and relapsed into silence.

III

Meanwhile another social escapade was being planned in utmost secrecy. Diantha intended to keep her promise and pay a party-call on Cousin Edgar, but she did not intend to do so in the company of her entire tribe. Her attitude toward the household differed from Mat's, which was almost bitter in its clear vision, as much as from Herby's loyalty. She was Amy's child in her love for the decorous,—a taste she could indulge but too seldom. Very early she had picked up a pitiful knack of saving appearances, according to her juvenile lights. And often appearances were best saved by preventing the physical presence of her father.

It did not occur to Diantha to confide in anyone. Her plan had been developed during night vigils, and submitted to no worldly scrutiny. Its only weakness lay in its financial aspect, which demanded an outlay of twenty cents.

The arrival of roller-skates upset these plans for the better. As soon as she could operate them, she would skate away from home without interrogation, and easily find her way to the South Side. So morning and night found her laboring against the force of gravity, her little face sharp with resolution. She watched other children flying along, swooping in effortless grace; she abandoned her equilibrium and suffered violence in trying to imitate them. A little girl named Marie became her counselor, and taught her by skating double to give herself up to the swing of the stroke. By the end of the week she had far outdistanced Mat, and had begun to find pleasure in her exercise.

On Saturday, after the breakfast-dishes and the beds,

she inconspicuously left home, in a neat red gingham dress. She was not the same child who sat subdued beside her father's elbow at breakfast. Her eyes reflected light like luster china, and her eyelashes aureoled them with pointed electric rays. The sun was splashing across the ripples of the lake as she rounded the corner of the Drive, and a company of joyous little dogs who were out exploring together ran some distance at her flying heels. There were brown horses trotting along the bridle-path, clicking their hoofs in a joyous rhythm.

"Will Cousin Edgar be pleased?" There was no real question of this; the ten minutes when her nose was buried in his shoulder had revealed to them both an affinity as indisputable as one's dinner, as ethereal as angel-cake.

The water-works now lay behind; and before long the street ended, most surprisingly, in a scrambled lot of buildings, an iron rail, and the river—entirely unbridged. How, then, did people proceed? Apparently by way of a street to the right.

The roller-skates clumped gallantly over cobble-stones, among trucks and vans, to Rush Street, and she set herself to negotiating the ascent of the bridge, which had to be done obliquely, with wild grapplings of passers-by when the tendency to roll backward seemed overmastering. What if the bridge should turn when she was half-way across? There was a pleasing horror in the thought . . . Suppose it should turn, and stick before it got back, and suppose she should have to stay on the bridge all day and all night, and Mamma would look for her everywhere . . . And a tug might come to take her off the bridge—the shore was a very short distance away; the tug would hardly have to move, one end would touch the bank while the other touched the bridge . . .

Putting her chin on the railing, she dreamed for some time, and gazed at the slimy river, which bore on its breast a bushel or so of potatoes, two loaves of bread, an old hat, and sundries.

There was a difficult fording of the stream of traffic after she left the river. Coachmen and draymen shouted at her, and pulled their horses up short; but she passed along heedless of the commotion, and launched down that dirty, spice-breathing way which properly brought-up children used to call Coffee Street. Each danger she escaped was expunged at once from her memory, and she faced the succeeding crossings as insouciant as Venus stepping from her fluted shell.

There was now a long pull ahead, for Great-Uncle Joshua lived near 18th Street; but with a broad sidewalk, a jolly June day, and benevolent passers-by, one could keep up one's heart. The skates rolled on and on, grating one's whole spine when the sidewalk was rough, and assuaging one's nerves when it was smooth. After a time the Logan monument was won, and then the Twelfth Street Station; and one could feel that the end was in sight.

From this point of hope, how came the descent? How did it befall that a despairing child pressed Great-Uncle Joshua's door-bell between the throes of dry, racking sobs?

It is known that there is a car-track on 18th Street. Being so near her goal, Diantha chose to disregard a slight wobbling in one of her skates, and was in the middle of the tracks before she perceived a street-car looming over her. With a gasp and a scrambling bound she launched herself out of its way; the toe-clamps of her skate slipped off, the ankle-strap broke: she stood on one skate and watched its precious twin being whirled and ground under the wheels, and dragged off down the street. With a piteous cry she ran after the street-car, but it gave her no heed. She looked wildly along the track for some crippled wreck, but none was to be seen. The car swung its ponderous haunches around the corner into Indiana Avenue, and was lost to view.

Diantha was first stunned, then sick. She fought with her tears, but they swept her away. She had now no

means of getting home; her father would be dreadfully cross; above all, she could never skate again . . . She tried standing on the remaining skate and kicking herself along with the other foot; but that was melancholy business after flying like Mercury on two winged shins. She preferred to sit down on a step and remove the relic of her happiness, and walk in dejection to Uncle Joshua's.

"Good gracious, child, what's the matter wid ye?" ejaculated Rhoda, opening the door. "Why, Lord save us, it's little Miss Diantha. Come in." The minute Diantha was inside, Rhoda enveloped her in a bear-hug, dried her tears, petted her, took her to the pantry for a "nice drink of wather."

"What is it, Rhoda?" called Cousin Edgar, over the banisters. "If it's a beggar, give her one of those cards."

"It's me, Cousin Edgar," called Diantha.

"For mercy's sake! Come on up—come up. It seems to me you always cry when you come over here!"

Diantha gave a shamefaced chuckle.

"Rhoda, bring Miss Diantha up in the elevator, to take her mind off her troubles."

The elevator was a perilous dark cubby-hole worked by what Rhoda called "elbow-grease," and the two of them made a tight fit of it; the pulleys rumbled at the end of the shaft. "Don't be scared," said Rhoda. "Yer great-aunt used to ride in it regular, and her bones were brittler than yours."

"I'm not scared," said Diantha. She had indeed stopped crying, in the face of this new experience.

Cousin Edgar's sitting-room upstairs was less majestic than the rest of the house, and one could enjoy oneself there without feeling that one was laughing in church. Its outstanding feature was an aquarium in the southern bay, in which floated exquisite fish, marvels of color. Near this was a peculiarly deep lounge-chair, with a table that fitted across its arms for reading and writing. There were so many books around the walls that they were

arranged on stepped shelves, the back tier of volumes peeping over the heads of the front tier. Above the fireplace a painting was let into the wood paneling,—a landscape which made Diantha think of music, although it represented only a meadow full of mist, and a yellow light in the sky behind some leafless trees.

This room Diantha was to know better than any other, and it became her university. Not, however, having the prophetic gift, she observed only that there was much in it to stimulate her curiosity. Cousin Edgar had settled far down in his chair, and pointed to a sturdy French tabouret, which she drew up beside him.

"Well, what was it this time?" he asked.

The dreadful history of the roller-skate was told, from its inception:—her learning to skate in less than a week, so as to be able to pay this private visit to Cousin Edgar; her successful voyage; the catastrophe; the probable limitations of her future activity.

"And so I suppose you'll walk home?" he enquired. One of his eyebrows ran up and the other down as he spoke.

"Yes," said Diantha drooping. She had hoped he would suggest lending her a dime or at least a nickel, but apparently even the most clairvoyant of men had his obtuse corners.

"Ah!" said Cousin Edgar. "I'm sorry you put yourself to so much trouble to come to see me. I get all the pleasure, and you get all the inconvenience. That doesn't seem fair, does it?"

"Oh, I don't mind," said Diantha, with a quivering lip. "I wanted to see you."

"For the Lord's sake, don't cry again!" exclaimed her host. "Tears are very intriguing in moderation; but you must remember I've hardly seen you do anything *but* cry. Show me what a brave little man you can be now, and forget the old skate. You had a good time with it, and it's gone, so you must have a good time without it."

Diantha made a colossal effort. "What pretty fishes!" she whispered. From this point they conversed famously for a time.

"You must stay to lunch," said Cousin Edgar. "Even the strongest man couldn't walk to the South Side and back without nourishment. It's in the city charter that way . . . You'd better telephone Amy, and tell her you'll be home before supper. Then we can talk in peace for a long time."

He instructed her how to telephone her house, and listened with pleasure to her precise New England utterance. He looked at her reedy slightness as she bent back against a table, holding the telephone, and thought to himself that the reason she cried was because she was all nerves; and he wished Amy and Vesey had been other than they were, for Diantha's sake. But there was a straight purity about her brow, a fineness in the curve of her lip, which seemed to promise that though she might suffer from jangled nerves, she would suffer nobly.

In the dining-room the carpet was thick, the chairs were upholstered with deep springs that let one down till one's nose barely came up to the level of one's soup-plate; the spoons weighed as much as pokers, the tumblers were cut glass.

Great-Uncle Joshua was delighted to welcome her. In civilian clothes he looked even more wistful than in the panoply of a veteran, and this expression was odd in one who had made his way and built up his fortune among strong men, who had been tested by the Civil War and again by the Chicago fire. It had come upon him since his wife Lucinda's death, and Tolman privately analyzed it to mean that "Father was losing his grip." Edgar, more sensitive, sometimes looked at him and wondered whether a dreamer had always been behind the crude shell of the pioneer, and was only now coming into his own; but his father was practically inarticulate outside of the runway of daily affairs, and gave no clue to the visions that passed

before his old blue eyes. He sat for hours sucking at an empty pipe, thinking long thoughts, smiling, frowning, making impetuous gestures. He was so thoroughly sane in all the affairs of life that this vagary passed without unkind comment.

"Father," said Edgar at the table, "you're driving out this afternoon, aren't you?"

"Why, yes. Carney is coming around at three."

"Don't you want to take Diantha along, and buy her a new roller-skate or two, and land her at home?" and he briefly sketched the morning's tragedy.

"By all means. Yes, my dear."

Diantha looked ecstatically from one to the other of her benefactors, and her hands flew to her throat in a characteristic gesture of emotion. Cousin Edgar gave her a look which told her she had no need to thank him in words.

"Where's Eddie?" asked Uncle Joshua, suddenly.

"Late as usual," answered his son, with some moroseness. "He goes gallivanting on a sketch-class every Saturday morning, and comes back consumed with admiration for his own genius. He may not get home at all, or he may drift in at two o'clock, as ravenous as a hyena."

Cousin Edgar's voice had a jarring note as he spoke of his boy. It was the one theme over which he lost his philosophic calm.

In effect, when the salad was on the table Eddie made his appearance.

"You smell to heaven!" said his father. "Speak to your cousin, can't you?"

Eddie shot a sullen look at the occupants of the table. "I sat on my palette," he explained with some constraint, "and they had to clean me off with turpentine. It does smell horrid, unless you happen to like it. Hello, Diantha."

"Where did you go, Eddie?" inquired his grandfather, mildly.

"Out to Jackson Park. They posed a model against the water. It was great, but much too hard for me."

"Are you a painter?" breathed Diantha, looking at him with her large eyes.

"Not yet," said Eddie to the eyes; and there was an arrogance in his tone which caused his father to chastise a bit of cheese silently with his fork. "I go every Saturday," he further said to the eyes, "and I do what I can between times."

"May I see your pictures?" asked Diantha.

"You can see them, but they're not much," he said. "If you'll come up to the ballroom after lunch I'll give you an exhibition."

Eddie was not prepossessing in appearance. He was sallow like his father, more rugged than his father, with an ugly, unhappy look about the mouth. Edgar's eyebrows were angular and strongly marked, giving his face distinction, while Eddie's were broad and heavy, and continued sparsely across between his eyes. His manners were far from pretty; and he was particularly tired of the comparisons which were often drawn against himself and in favor of his cousin Fanning Marriott. Between these two there was never any real sympathy.

This, although he did not yet know it, was a red-letter day in Eddie's life, for it was the day he first fell in love. Eddie's heart was not like anyone else's, and I shall have more to say of it hereafter; let it suffice for the present that Diantha did not suspect her conquest till years later.

He took her up to the third floor, and led her through a maze of turning-lathes, magnetos, stereopticons, Whiteley exercisers, into the corner dedicated to his latest hobby. Here were easels and palettes and paint-boxes, sketches, compositions, heaps of drawings. He showed her all his work, meticulously, and told her what he had intended in each instance. She looked at it all with her deep-gray eyes, and forebore to say how little she responded to

these expressions of intention. To an artist Eddie's work would have shown some slight promise: Diantha merely wondered if people looked as ugly to him as he drew them.

Eddie asked no more than that she should gaze forever at his bungled canvasses.

"Sit still," said he, "while I sketch you."

She sat hunched like a frightened rabbit, while he made three false starts and tore them up; then she decided to go downstairs.

"What have people told you about me, Diantha?" asked Cousin Edgar.

"Nothing," replied Diantha, honestly, after reflection. "Only that you were sick, and lived here at Uncle Joshua's."

She could not have said anything to hurt him more.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi*," he said. "For a while I was the most famous member of the family, and I put the name of Marriott on the front page of the papers."

"How?"

"Several ways. It was fun. But it went to pieces all at once. I . . . I wasn't strong enough for my ambitions."

"Is that why you are sick?"

"I'm not sick, I'm burnt out—used up—scrapped. I had three happy years, and three years of hell, and then the finish. When it began I was twenty-seven, and at the end I was two hundred and ten."

"What did you do?"

"Well, I was a legislator. It's the most interesting job in the world, if you have an aptitude for it."

"Was that what made you unhappy?"

"Oh, that,—no. That amused me. No, it was squabbling with my wife that was hell. I have no business to say disagreeable things to you, and use strong language."

"Things are often very disagreeable," said Diantha, "and you might as well talk about them."

"You poor little monkey!" said Cousin Edgar. "Don't get any more worldly knowledge into your head till you're seven years older. You must come over here whenever you can, and tell me what you think about, and I'll tell you what you ought to think about, and we'll grow up in Arcadia. . . . Is that a bargain?"

She gave him her hand on it.

IV

THE following day was a lively one on Hickory Place. The echoes of Diantha's exploit, culminating in her descent from a brougham, had not died away when a mutiny broke out.

"Babes," said Vesey, "we're going over to see Cousin Tolman after lunch."

"When were we invited?" asked Mat, noncommittal.

"Yesterday." But Mat saw by his mother's face that this was not so.

"I'm busy this afternoon," said he. "Right after church I'm going off with a fellow."

"The deuce you are!" cried his father. "Your mother and I want you with us."

"I'm not going where I'm not wanted."

"I didn't notice any of this punctiliousness when you heard about Diantha strolling across town to see her cousins."

"Di's a kid, and it's different."

"I *was* invited beforehand," put in Diantha, "Cousin Edgar specially asked me to come."

"Mat, you must come along, we'll talk no more about it."

"I'm not going, and you know perfectly well you've no way of forcing me to."

Amy's face expressed pain during this unseemly tilt, but she had no influence to exert. Diantha sat observant.

"Well," said Vesey, retreating, "the other two will be enough."

Mat whirled on Diantha. "Do you want to go, Di?"

"No, Mat."

"If you had a scrap of spirit you'd put your foot down, too."

"Mat!" said Amy sharply. "Diantha doesn't need your advice."

"I think she does," said Mat, rising from the table, and walking away with his hands in his pockets, to be seen no more that day.

After luncheon, a thorough scrubbing was performed on the less spirited members of the household, with attention to necks and ears at which Herby always rebelled. He was nine years old, but juvenile beyond the wont of his contemporaries. Vesey polished his plug-hat with his elbow, Amy assumed her gold watch and chain. The passage to the big house on the corner seemed all too short for Amy and Diantha, who looked forward to an ordeal.

"Best foot forward, my hearties!" hissed Vesey during the instant before the door opened.

The butler seemed surprised to see them, but asked them to step in. This they accordingly did, and then huddled together in the hall while he tripped upstairs.

Tolman's house was handsome and substantial in a newer style than his father's. The entrance on Hickory Place had vestibule doors of wrought iron and glass; the curtains were flat strips of embroidered linen inset with lace; the hall itself, severely bounded by gray stone walls hung with tapestries, was made habitable only by Italian chairs with narrow red velvet seats and perpendicular backs. A huge carved mantel overhung the yawning void of the hearth. The stairs swept grandiosely upward. Through the doors on the left one could see the dining-table not yet cleared of luncheon, and the lake flashing blue rays in the background. To the right were a billiard-room and a little reception-room, side by side. Diantha was far more impressed than at Uncle Joshua's, though if that resembled a church, this was more like a peculiarly superb hotel.

Heels were heard tapping across the hall above; someone descended the stairs—Cousin Daisy. There was a faint fold in her brow.

"So nice of you, Amy. And you, Vesey. You must come up. We have had a few guests to luncheon, and Gilbert O'Hara has been playing the piano to help along digestion. I think I'll send the children up with Potter to Josie's room; I didn't let her come down to-day, and she'll be delighted to see them; I know she's bored to death, —Potter, will you take Miss Diantha and Master Herbert up to the nursery? Come with me, Amy. Will you leave your wraps? No?"

The parents disappeared, and the children were left to the mercy of a butler who was all gray like a wraith, his skin, his lips, the iris of his eyes, and the sparse hairs of his head. He wore little side-burns, horrible of aspect to Herby. The two little Powells followed him up the stairs, treading painfully in their squeaky shoes, while a babble of polite enjoyment proceeded from the drawing-room. Silence fell just as they reached the first floor, and then a series of arpeggios from the piano. The children stopped, fascinated, behind a little console and peered around the corner into a roomful of well-fed adults, who were lounging in easy-chairs, smoking or sipping coffee. A young man sat on the piano-bench, with his right foot on the pedal, and his left leg extended straight across the floor; he had curly yellow hair, and glasses pinching the concave bridge of his nose, and a lean chin scooped out under the jaw-bone.

Potter tried to induce his charges to ascend, but they were spellbound. They saw Papa and Mamma whispering to Cousin Daisy over by the window; they saw a harp, —unfamiliar, romantic object,—in one corner: on the whole there was much to observe.

The arpeggios were broken by three smashing chords, dropped from the shoulder, and Herby jumped half out of

his skin. As in a nightmare, Diantha saw the inevitable—the insecure table received an impetus from him, and straightway a vase was dashed to earth, a vase full of American Beauties. The porcelain flew into bits, a lake spread over the floor and dripped down into the lower hall. All eyes in the drawing-room answered the stimulus of sound.

Diantha took Herby's hand and scampered upstairs in very panic, leaving Potter amid the wreckage; they paused on the next floor while Cousin Daisy's laugh was heard, assuring the world that it was nothing at all, no harm had been done; it was a horrid vase—a wedding present from one of Tolman's relations.

They dared go no farther amid ominous closed doors. For five minutes they stood transfixed, while Potter noiselessly abolished the vestiges of the accident, and Gilbert O'Hara continued to perform arpeggios. Diantha wished passionately to die—if one could die and take one's corpse with one to heaven through a skylight—anything to avoid descending those stairs again, in full view of the multitude!

A bench was under the hall-window, and upon this the little Powells sat miserably. Neither Josie nor the divine Fanning happened by, and they were only rediscovered when Potter was sent to summon them,—his features expressing grave distaste for their personalities,—for departure.

Meanwhile Gilbert O'Hara reached the end of his repertoire. A young matron smartly dressed in white serge broke up the party by springing to her feet and shouting to her Jocko a reminder that they had people coming in for bridge at home half-an-hour ago. "It's been *so* amusing, Mrs. Marriott, I'd no idea of the time." . . . In three minutes the luncheon had melted completely away.

"Well, Amy!" said Tolman. "Now we can have a regular visit about old times."

"They're a long way back, Tolman."

"You remember Buck, and Len and me, that used to go up to Springfield together?"

"Dear old Buck—what's become of him?"

"Oh, he's a broker, lives on Long Island. Do you remember how they used to bait your father about Blaine?"

"Young scoundrels you were. Do you remember your first love, Olivia Baxter?"

"Lord, yes, and the time I was engaged to Dora, and something came between us . . ."

"Something? My dear Tolman, *I* was that something. You've probably forgotten if you ever knew. I did it craftily. I didn't want you thrown away on Dora . . ."

In talking to Tolman, Amy came as near to recovering her lost vivacity as was ever possible. Vesey stared at her in amazement, while she renewed her youth with her cousin. Daisy, chatting to him, listened with half an ear to the other dialogue.

" . . . I'm certainly glad to have you in Chicago," said Tolman, heartily. "You remind me of old times that were awfully jolly . . . Tell me about your plans."

Vesey's expression became fiercely concentrated in his effort to influence his wife's reply, while continuing to exchange banalities with Daisy; but Amy was a spouse unworthy of his training.

"Nothing very special, Tolman," she said, dropping back into the drab manner of her middle-age. "Vesey's business called him here. I expect I'll send the children to school, and I'll have plenty to do, keeping house."

"You were always a bully good cook."

"I've practiced a lot since you saw me," she said with a faint smile.

"Well, if you want any advice, you just come to me, and we'll talk things over personally, and perhaps I can do something for you. You've got a nice bunch of little Powells."

"Tolman, I could cry when I think of their breaking your beautiful vase."

"Good riddance, my dear. We've got so many, Daisy keeps 'em stored in the basement."

Vesey fidgeted. "Why doesn't she talk to some purpose?" But as if Daisy knew what turn matters would take if she let him intrude, she held him firmly to her wing of the conversation. And so, uneventfully, the call drew to a close, before Tolman had offered to educate the children, furnish the house, or subsidize any of Vesey's Land Development Companies. Vesey felt justly vexed.

"You must come again soon," said Tolman, holding Amy's hand. "Daisy, how about lunch next Sunday?"

"Oh, my dear, have you forgotten we're moving up to Lake Forest Thursday? They must come out to spend the night with us some time."

"Not half bad," said Vesey on the way home. "Though I must say, my lovely wife, that you let your opportunities slide disgracefully."

"Vesey, I *can't* sit up and beg!"

"I suppose not, no. You're not made for it. I think we'll come out just as well in the long run."

"I was so shaken by that dreadful accident . . . Herby . . ."

"Herby's a marked man, anyway. They'll never forget him again. If he lives to be great, they'll tell at dinner-parties how he kicked over the jardinière when he was nine."

"And I did feel confused when I found we had walked in on other guests."

"We've as good a right to visit Tolman Marriott as they have."

"Yes, but they are such *smart* people, Vesey. They dress so well, they have so much assurance. I never feel at ease—I always think they're looking me over."

"What makes them smart people? The very fact that they have assurance. If you'd only hold your head up,

Amy, you could give odds to any of 'em." By this time they were in their own modest drawing-room, and Vesey was taking off his patent-leather boots preparatory to a long, lazy afternoon with the Sunday paper.

"It's pitiable, the way you let people tramp on you. You've got looks, you've got breeding, you've got education, you've got a fond husband and three handsome children, and some day you'll have buckets of money. What more do you want before you set up as a smart society woman? Eh?" and he made as if to pinch her ear.

The slight, weary movement of the head with which she avoided this attention was most indicative; it was a formal and half-hearted protest, an assertion of some last unvalued trace of superiority.

Long after Diantha had gone to bed, she heard a scratching on the panel of her door.

"Quee-coo!" she called softly.

Mat came in noiselessly in his socks, and sat on the edge of her bed.

"Tell me about it," he whispered.

She went through the whole horrid tale.

"Darn sycophants!" he hissed. "I don't see why you stand for it."

Diantha patted his hand, admitting her weak tolerance.

"Sometimes I think I'll just clear out and go West and make my own way."

"I don't believe you'll do that," her whisper was cool and limpid.

He was stung. "What do you mean?"

She made no answer. Her meaning, half-formed in her own mind, was that Mat was his father's son after all.

V

"So he wouldn't go, wouldn't he?" Cousin Edgar was listening with interest to Diantha's piquant narrative of the past Sunday's call.

"He ran away for the day. I don't know where he went. Papa was as mad as hops; but he doesn't stay mad long."

"Tell me what Mat's like. Here; have some more." This last referred to a saucer of candied orange-peel. "What's he interested in? Who are his friends? What does he do with his spare time?"

"Before we left Utica he used to play with two boys called Burns; they got into lots of trouble. You know there was a gang from Mat's school, and another gang, and they used to fight in the alley."

"Does he like to fight?"

"Yes—well—yes, I think he does. Not always. Sometimes when there was a fight he'd come home, specially if he wanted to read."

"Well, what did he read?"

"All sorts of re-diculous books—I don't know what. He and Ooky Burns used to edit a paper."

"You don't say! A real printed paper?"

"Part was printed and part was by hand. There were three copies every week. Ooky used to draw the cartoons by hand. It was called 'The Red Rag.'"

Edgar almost sat up, in his surprise. "I wish you could get hold of a copy for me," he said. "Do you suppose Mat has any?"

"Oh, dear, yes, a boxful."

"Won't you ask him to bring them over some day, and let me read them? I take great interest in the Press."

"I'll ask him."

"Will he come?"

"I'm not sure. You see he doesn't like relations."

"He doesn't like sponging on relations, you mean. Well, you tell him to bring his own lunch in a paper parcel if he feels sensitive, and say I want to get acquainted with him as man to man. Will you tell him that?"

"Oh, yes."

"What's your own attitude?"

"What's that?"

"I mean, how do *you* feel about relatives?"

"I *like* them"—this with a deep glance of coquetry.

"You little minx! I didn't mean me, I meant Cousin Daisy and Tolman and the family."

"You mean do I mind going to see them?"

"Yes."

"Well, when I went to see them you remember I didn't see them very much: but I think I'd like Cousin Tolman . . . Cousin Daisy doesn't like me . . . She sent Mamma a box of Josie's old dresses for me . . . I'd rather eat poison than wear them—but she says I have to . . . They're much prettier, of course"—she glanced down at her brown plaid gingham—"but they're twice too big. Josie's a rather fat girl. At least she used to be, and these are the dresses she used to have . . . I never get fat."

"I suppose you're proud of your figure."

"Oh, no," said Diantha complacently. "But I can't bear Josie, not anything about her. She's mean. If I wore one of those dresses to her house, I'll bet she'd tell about it to everybody."

"Is that one of the things you'd never do if you had the chance?"

"Never, never!" cried Diantha, and her eyes flashed. "If you'd worn as many old clothes as I have . . . !"

"Diantha, this is a solemn question, and I want you to

answer me truthfully. I want you to give me a list of three things you would never do, besides talk about what happened to your own old clothes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean like this: would you ever tell a lie?"

"No, I don't tell lies,—I can't because I never can remember any. Mat can tell lies."

"Well, then, you begin your list—'I would never tell a lie.' Now two more things."

"I can't think of any more. You ask me."

"No, I want you to think. Here, take this orange-peel, and go and sit by yourself on the stairs till you've thought; and after you give me your three answers, I'll tell you the three things Fanning would never do."

"When did you ask Fanning?" Diantha blushed deeply as she spoke his name.

"When he was over the other day."

"Does he come over here?"

"Oh, yes. He comes in from Lake Forest and spends the night every now and then during the summer. . . . I used to have grown-up friends, but now I like boys and girls better . . ."

Diantha did not believe this, but let it pass. The promise of hearing something about Fanning filled her mind, and with the saucer of orange-peel, she slowly retired to the landing of the stairs.

Light streamed in colored triangles through the prisms of the window, and lay on the stair-carpet as if one could pick it up. From below came the restrained tick of the hall-clock, and out in Michigan Avenue the horses' feet went clop-clopping by. The landing was not uninhabited, for in the angle stood a suit of Oriental armor, tarnished and grotesque, with a helmet suggestive of tusks and yellow eyeballs. One's consciousness strayed mildly from the armor to Cousin Edgar, from roller-skates to Fanning, from old dresses to Josie, from Josie to Fanning, from Fanning to Eddie, from Eddie to Mat and his

mutiny of Sunday, from the mutiny to the Sunday call, and so again to Fanning. What would his three answers be? Was it possible he might come in this afternoon—this minute? One would not know his answers till one produced at least a semblance of reply of one's own, and how was that possible? If Cousin Edgar asked questions, one might answer truthfully, as one did in school after study; but that was another matter from sitting down to seek abstractions in the void.

Twenty minutes passed—an incredible time—before she came back with the empty saucer, and stood demurely in front of Cousin Edgar's chair. He slipped a marker into a thick volume on his book-rest, and looked at her.

"Well?"

"I would never tell a lie. I would never tell a secret that Mat told me. I would never go in a field where there was a cow."

Cousin Edgar laughed. "Those are good answers if they are true. Were you trying to be smart when you thought them up?"

Her eyelids flickered downward. How could one avoid trying to be "smart," with grown-ups who paid the premium of laughter for "smartiness"?

"It *was* unfair," he admitted. "But I wish you'd learn to tell me the real truth. We can't be friends unless you do. Well, in the course of time I'll get to know you, and worm some better answers than that out of you without your guessing it."

"What did Fanning say?"

"He said . . . I keep wondering how well he knows himself; he may be subject to delusions about his own magnanimity. He *is* a bit self-conscious, don't you think?" (This was over Diantha's head, and she held her peace.) "He said he would never cheat in a game, nor sneak out of a fight, nor forget what he owed."

"Of course not."

Cousin Edgar began to wonder what value abstract

virtue had in conduct for his young kinsfolk, who responded so much as a matter of course to the obvious slogans of righteousness. It was to be one of his hobbies during the next decade to find out.

After Diantha had quitted the house, he sat for a long time without opening his book, setting himself anew some of the old problems which lay unsolved under the *débris* of his broken life. He had always been introspective, but introspection turns bitter when it clarifies irrevocable mistakes, and tragically confirms the futility of endeavor; and to escape from this bitterness, Edgar Marriott had become a philosopher without a system, watching his friends for their least considered—that is to say their indicative—actions, judging their capacities and achievements, and applying his favorite tests and gauges.

His idols had stood to him for certain traits, the same in accordance with which he judged the measure of his own failure, and the shortcomings of those he had loved. The questions he had lately asked of Fanning and Diantha were unfruitful attempts at gauging their quality.

Were they honest?—so ran his catechism. Were they honest, were they generous, brave and loyal? How nearly did they meet his standard? And at the points wherein they were lacking, how far could his influence avail to build up the worth and solidity of his race?

Edgar had still the will to action, and this was a field which needed no physical vigor for the tilling. It lay under his hand. How far dared he usurp the function of omniscience, and meddle with the fragile organisms that were now springing toward their maturity?

"It may be wrong to meddle, and it may be dangerous," he told himself, "but it's one of those temptations you know beforehand you won't be able to resist."

And meanwhile young Eddie sat morose among his malodorous painting-tools, and reacted with ferocity toward his father's no less unbalanced attempts at direction. These two hid from each other a deeply-buried fond-

ness, never liberated, which had about it something fatal and desperate. At every move they made one another unhappy, and hated themselves in consequence.

* * * * * *

Not long after this, Vesey chose a breezy morning for a call on the financial head of the family, who was protected from the outer world by many mahogany railings and telephone-switchboards. Claiming kinship, he penetrated the sanctum, smelling of leather and cigars, from which Tolman directed the march of commerce—he and his portfolio, full of prospectuses, letters, and alluring photographs.

He talked smoothly, as one well prepared, for a certain length of time, and fluttered his printed matter before Tolman's amiable dark eyes. However, after a lapse of minutes, Tolman quietly pushed the electric button on his desk.

"You're too speculative, Vesey," he said. "I haven't capital enough for your sort of game. I'm one of these conservative bankers you read about, and this proposition is a little out of my province.—Very interesting, yes; some fellows might get away with it"—and from his face one could not judge whether he assumed Vesey to be one of those fellows—"but I'm out for steady, small returns. I—I'm really surprised, your coming to me about this deal; you must have known I'm not the man for you. How are the children? Any more jardinières busted lately? Nice little family . . ."

And Vesey found himself inducted into the corridor by an office-boy with a knowing eye, which said plainly that its owner would not be caught letting Vesey through the barrier again without warrant.

Tolman sat back on the hind legs of his chair, and tapped the desk with his fingers; then he whistled an air, pulled his private check-book out of a drawer, and drew a check for $50 to the order of Amy Marriott Powell.

VI

With the approach of autumn, Joshua Marriott began to omit his daily drive and trip to the office; by November he was breakfasting pretty regularly in bed; at Christmas-time he was so feeble as to make Edgar hesitate before inviting the clan to the usual celebration. But the old gentleman had no idea of sparing himself that pleasant strain; he took a personal part in the ordering, and tried to potter among the shops. For days Rhoda and Bridget toiled among the substantial delicacies of the Christmas dinner, and when the time came, he presided over the turkey at his own board, and pressed second helpings upon his guests, already full to the eyes. The children, imperceptibly older, performed valiantly with knife and fork. Later they counted and compared gifts like misers, and before the day was out, they had negotiated two or three good "swaps."

When the house was again silent, and Rhoda had picked up the paper and ribbon, Joshua shuffled into the parlor, dim except for the colored lights on the tree, and stood thinking, as was his habit. He was discovered some time later, lying prone, his face distorted and blotched, and his breathing stertorous. The stroke was, according to the doctor, far from serious; but after this time he hardly left his room, and spent hours in his dreaming silence.

Edgar sat with him day after day, reading or writing necessary letters, and talking over old times with his father, whom he had not known intimately in spite of their years together, and whom he had perhaps undervalued on account of the dominating personality of his mother.

Joshua had several pictures moved up to his room:—the famous portrait of Lucinda at thirty-odd; a certain water-color, ill-executed, showing the frame house on Washington Street, from which he had gone to war, and which had been consumed by the fire of 1871; a photograph of Tolman twelve years old, and rendered mature by a low-crowned derby, holding by the hand an Edgar four years of age, wearing a plaid silk frock with short sleeves, and a "spit-curl" across his brow.

On the wall beside the window had always hung a miniature with a red-velvet mat and a deep-boxed frame.

"That's a sweet picture of mother," said Edgar one day; "but I hardly imagine it's a good likeness. I'd never recognize it."

"Eh? It was very good at the time." Joshua raised himself on the sofa to peer at the picture. "That likeness was taken the year before we were married, and she sent it out to me in Chicago. I tell you I pretty near burst a blood-vessel when I took it out of the box. Cousin Mort brought it to me when he went through to Milwaukee the first time.—Yes, she changed a lot between then and the time you remember."

The picture showed a girl of eighteen, with mild, hazel eyes, and bands of pale-brown hair drawn over her ears—a pretty, appealing, undecided face, lips just parted, with the corners drawn in by a soft smile. Comparing the miniature with the portrait, one found the same square forehead, but no hint in the former of that sharp angle of the jaw, that shrewd line from the base of the nostrils down, nor those large, executive-looking ears, which the painter had bluntly but effectively portrayed.

"I suppose women aged earlier in those days," said Edgar. "That picture looks older than Daisy does today, but mother was ten years younger then than Daisy is now."

"Your mother was ten times the woman Daisy is or ever will be," said Joshua with unwonted spirit. Then his

good smile returned. "Daisy's made Tolman an excellent wife, and she has a fine, handsome lot of children." He brooded some time before going on.

"The reason your mother looked older than her age," he finally broke out, "was that she did two men's work during the four years of the war. You weren't born then, but Tolman remembers some. She sent me packing as soon as they called for volunteers . . . You know the Tolmans back in Massachusetts were all red-hot abolitionists . . . Your mother grew up overnight, as you might say . . . She hadn't ever expected we'd be separated: the first years we were married she leaned on me for everything . . . I used to hire the hired girls, and pay 'em their wages, and I used to cut the grass, and mend the furniture, and make bargains with peddlers . . . I used to get letters from her when I was first in camp, and they said everything was fine; they were full of little jokes about Tolman—he was just a baby. But then I had letters from John Rackett, my foreman, too, and *he* told me Lucinda was down at the foundry every day, poking her nose into the office and the plant till she knew just what went on; and pretty soon she was bringing in new orders, and coming down to oversee the filling of them; and then she fired a couple of my men, and all but broke up the establishment, and Rackett had like to have wired me to desert and come home; but she put in a pair of boys she picked out herself, and reorganized the whole place; and those two boys were Benjamin Bush Thacher, who was my superintendent up till the fire, and then went into the Columbian Trust Company, and gave Tolman his start when he got out of college; and the other was Senator Comstock that died last year. Yes—your mother had to learn to be a man and a woman too. She taught Tolman his A B C's just as she taught you yours, only he learned his about the time of the Wilderness Campaign; and it was that same year you were born. I never saw you till after Appomattox. You ought to have heard John

Rackett talk about Lucinda. He said she made three good big mistakes in judgment within two weeks after she started in: but she took all the blame herself, and John said those were the last three times she ever had anything put over on her. He said she'd talk to the men like a Dutch uncle, and she scared the life right out of them . . . She'd have made a wonderful man . . . but she was a satisfactory sort of woman too."

He was silent again, and Edgar thought of his mother as he had known her during his long boyhood illnesses and convalescences,—a capable, firm-stepping, ambitious woman, with little surface warmth, whom he had yet unreasonably loved. Tolman had been her favorite son, perhaps because he was forceful and solid and went his own way regardless of her efforts to bring him up as a future President; and Daisy had contented her well enough as a daughter-in-law. Edgar, frail in health, temperamental and vain, mercurial in his moods, had never demanded her respect, but she let him poke fun at her, upset her dignity, and rifle her cupboards.

Oddly, it was Edgar the undervalued, who had absorbed his mother's ambitions and political tastes. Until his health betrayed him, he had progressed along the road which for some few leads to the White House and for others to lesser political rank. But Lucinda was too much a denizen of her age to sympathize with child-labor legislation—in fact she regarded this particular doctrine as an unjustifiable meddling with the rights of poor parents —and Edgar's wife Naomi Cranston was a thorn in the flesh.

Edgar knew that his mother had in some measure hampered his career by her lack of insight: he wondered whether her antipathy for Naomi and Naomi's ways and views, had been a cause, or a result, of their own failure to make their marriage successful; whether with Lucinda's help instead of her antagonism, Naomi might have been happy, made him happy . . .

But he had not blamed his mother for acting in accordance with her nature; and the riddle of his marriage was not solved by blaming her . . . His thought strayed back to her personality, her tastes. She had, as had her husband, something of the crudity of the pioneer, and she loved display. The house was a monument to her feeling for grandeur, with its stained-glass gloom, its statues and Sèvres vases and deep-framed oil-paintings. Lucinda had loved to entertain, notwithstanding she was ill at ease in society. She became nervous, talked high and laughed loud, and failed of wit—all this she realized, without being able to change her manner. She had never been, in spite of her recognized strength of character, a figure in the inner circle of society as it was constituted in her day, but everyone knew and respected her. It must be emphatically said that Lucinda was no snob, her hospitality being rather ample than select; and one met around her table not only the cultivated New Englanders to whom she was allied by race, but uncouth and unpretending pioneer types, self-made business men with some of whom she had herself established profitable commercial relations, women who had pooled their own muscular energy with their husbands in establishing homesteads on the frontier; and failures, drifters in the backwash of progress.

Joshua had been, the world agreed, under Lucinda's thumb. It was he in the first instance who collected capital enough for the foundry; but by the end of the war Lucinda had set her stamp on its organization. Public opinion had credited her with the initial idea and much of the development of the stove-factory on which Joshua's first fortune was founded; and it was she who urged him into more and more downtown real-estate investments, so that he had to complain for years of being "land-poor." At the time of the fire, when the factory was destroyed, Lucinda had left her household goods to burn if they liked, while she set herself to borrowing more capital.

Edgar had always paid her the tribute of thinking her

influence had been paramount in the family; but it now struck him that both in himself and to a less degree in Tolman were elements quite foreign to her standards. From her, no doubt, he took his own political bent, and the nervous force which in his case, as it was not supported by an adequate physique, helped to burn out his energies; but his attitude of mind had not come to him from her; it was indeed repugnant to her good sense, as being impractical and subversive of solid government—this quixotic bent for philanthropic legislation, this unnecessary tampering with the *status quo*. Her family had indeed been Abolitionists, but certainly she had progressed along another line; and it was not from her he took his interests. "Wild-goosy" had been her description of them.

His eyes rested on his father, who lay day-dreaming with hands folded across his afghan rug. The expression in his eyes reminded Edgar of an old daguerreotype taken during the war. It was in a cabinet close at hand. The tricky luster of the plate teased him a moment before he penetrated it, but soon he caught the face, which had the peculiarly spiritual look of the daguerreotype. Young Captain Marriott had worn his hair long enough to hang behind his ears, and a dark beard made him unfamiliar; but his chin was lifted at an angle which Edgar recognized as his own fighting tilt of defiance, and his eyes looked out from under the brim of the field-cap with a steady radiance which was of another world: and it was the same light which even now shone blue and clear under his aged lids. On the young man's lips was the faintest, the most ethereal of smiles—"the smile," thought Edgar, "of a man who is willing to face death."

He had thought of his father as massive; but the slight build of the picture showed that his mass had been in flesh rather than bone-structure. He was much of Edgar's type, physically, and the face was shaped like Edgar's,

though it had not his cleverness nor his bold crooked brows.

Edgar began wondering what his father would have been like if he had married some other woman than Lucinda Tolman, if after the war he had come back and met the world with this dreaming radiance in his eyes, unchecked by practical compulsions, if a brisk business had not been released into his hand, if hungry mouths had not awaited his evening returns. There was no doubt that this face in the shimmering daguerreotype was the face of an idealist, and an idealist more naïve than Edgar had ever been.

And yet nothing in his father's later life had borne out such a prophecy. He had been honest, industrious, shrewd, benevolent—never quixotic. Looking again at Lucinda's portrait, Edgar realized that the husband of such a woman could not have remained quixotic.

As he glanced about the room, he saw with new eyes certain time-honored decorations:—over the mantel a sword, two pistols and a knapsack, the emblems of Joshua's romantic and simple loyalty; a framed copy of the Declaration of Independence . . . here his thought paused. The Marriott stock was true-blue Revolutionary: Marriotts had fought under Washington through his darkest days and up to Yorktown; a great-grand-uncle had been among the dead at Saratoga . . . The Declaration of Independence is an imaginative and quixotic document, though an essentially vigorous one . . .

On the mantel were a great shell and a spray of coral, to which some story clung in Edgar's memory.

"Father," he said, "where did you get that shell?"

Joshua slowly came back from star-gazing. "I've had those since I was nine years old. They've traveled a good many thousand miles with me, because I took a fancy to them when I was a little tike. A missionary gave them to me when he stopped at my father's house—a missionary from the South Sea Islands, called Burr. He used to tell

about the cannibals. For a long time I wanted to go out among the heathen and preach the gospel to them . . . you know boys get all manner of notions. I hung onto those shells because they made me think of the South Sea Islands . . . I never got to go out there . . .

"I kind of hoped," he went on, "that one of my children might turn out a missionary . . . They're good sort of men . . . They're needed, too . . . But of course you boys went your own way, and I never influenced you much —never tried to—perhaps I was scared to. Your mother was different, she had decided views on everything, knew what she liked and what she didn't like; and she brought you up to be a credit to the family, and I didn't see any need to interfere. It's hard to tell . . ."

"I suppose you lie there and think over your life and your plans and your successes and failures . . ." hazarded Edgar.

"Oh, I don't think very hard," said Joshua, with his pleasant smile. "An old man's mind don't keep on the track. I remember different things, like when I was a little fellow up in Vermont, and when you boys were small, and about the war . . . If I'd planned things they might have come out different, but I don't know as they'd have come out any better."

"No, planning's a waste of time."

"I like to see these little young chaps around the house, and the girls. They may turn into anything, later, you know. They're a smart crowd of youngsters."

"Yes," said Edgar, thinking aloud, "they may turn into anything. They've all got the Marriott blood, whatever that may stand for: Tolman's children have another streak, Ricky Pellew and his stylish daughter; Amy's bunch haven't got Mother's aggressiveness mixed into them, but they've got a flavor of Vesey Powell, and that's slippery stuff; poor little old Eddie has the warring natures of two temperamental parents, and his mother is as clever as the crack of a whip . . . The Lord saw I

needed amusement, so he beset me behind and before with a continuous vaudeville, and an unusually entertaining one."

His father had ceased to listen. He never talked as Edgar talked, and for years Edgar had looked down on him. During these long days that preceded Joshua's death, his son longed to find out the answers to questions about his father's personality which, he now realized, bore upon the future drama of the family; but Joshua, who for years had contented himself with current conversation and a few platitudes, remained inarticulate, and never put into words the source of the light which illuminated his aged musings.

After his death Amy came over, and helped with the innumerable affairs about the house. Daisy was also present, red-eyed and black-gowned, and she gave many orders, but the smoothness of operation came from Amy, who fitted at once into the machinery of the household. Edgar, whose strength was not equal to executing commissions, depended on her entirely, and they talked much together.

As if sorrow were her native air, she was beautified while she moved through her work. Her weariness and timidity turned to dignity, her sad eyes were serene.

"Amy," said Edgar—she had been arranging flowers, and he had come in to watch; and they were both sobered by the coffin in the room—"you are invaluable, you show a nobility . . ."

"Oh, no, Edgar, don't say that. If there's one trait I lack, it's nobility."

"One can see that you have faced life, and stripped it of non-essentials, and learned endurance."

"I am a great coward," said Amy, in her clear unresonant voice. "I have been envying Uncle Joshua there." She did not speak bitterly. "To me it seems a blessed state to have lived your life and performed your duties and gone honorably to the grave. One could rest.

One could be sure then no more was possible, that no more was expected of one. I have so many duties ahead, they terrify me," and as she turned her eyes to his, Edgar could see in them a flinching, a lack of confidence in the future; "if they were all behind me, for better or worse, I would gladly die."

"They're a fine lot of children," said he, answering her thought. "You've no cause for anxiety, they'll all live to make you proud of them."

She gave him a wan smile of gratitude, but—"There are so many devils abroad," she said; and he could see they were real presences to her. "It's a miracle that any children grow up to be the men and women their mothers want."

"You know, Amy, you can count on me for any help I'm able to give. I'm awfully interested in your children, especially Diantha, and even if it were none of my business I'd be obliged to keep an eye on them."

"You're wonderfully kind to them," she said. But her eyes, more expressive than her face, said cruelly to him, in the language of fear, "Have you been able to guide your own life? Are you all-wise, that you consider yourself a safe counselor for my brood?"

This one look broke their sympathy, vexing and wounding Edgar. He thought of her impatiently as a timorous woman, forgetting or not knowing that all of good in her family was her own construction of bricks without straw, brick laid upon brick to create the impossible, and each one laid against the opposition of besetting fears—some of the fears real and some, their close kin, imaginary.

VII

A FEW weeks after Joshua's death, among a welter of business correspondence about the estate and the Memorial Hospital, Edgar came upon a big gray envelope that caused a flickering in his nerves. He held the letter by one corner, and snapped it back and forth with his finger for some time. Would she have the decency to be amiable, in a letter of condolence? . . .

Finally he ripped it open. The eccentric writing was as familiar to him as her voice had once been.

"New York.

"Dear Edgar,

"I was sorry when I heard of your father's death—it will leave you much alone, and in a way I think you were more companions than you realized—you were very like him—but I always got on beautifully with him—and I shall miss him out of this little world, even though I never saw him lately. You know I am a skeptic—but you are an enthusiast, and you are able to believe and hope—for something—I don't know what—what *do* you hope, Edgar? You never were able to explain to me—but from my heart I wish you all the happiness and comfort such a hope can bring——"

(Although a literary woman, Naomi did not punctuate her private correspondence.)

"I am glad to be given this reason for writing, as I have felt you ought perhaps to be told that I am about to marry again—Rufus Coningham—you will say I ought to know better, but I am a gambler and can't help taking chances, and the odds are more favorable this time—in

the first place I am fifteen years older than when I married you, and much more sedate and wise, and then Rufus is of a phlegmatic temperament, and besides he knows exactly what to expect of me—which you didn't—you idealized—so did I, perhaps, when I was twenty——

"My dear Edgar, I feel this is a suitable time—as when making one's will—to forgive one's enemies—and I hereby state that I have forgiven and forgotten almost all that ever happened between us—I don't hate you any more—and as you see you did not succeed in wrecking my life permanently. I sincerely hope the damage I did to yours was such as time has repaired or will repair—I have not seen your name in the public prints—that would have been impossible to say ten years ago, wouldn't it?—but I trust your feet are back on some rung of your career, for which you were exactly fitted—and in which you always commanded my admiration and respect.

"With much sympathy

"Sincerely yours,

"Naomi Cranston."

When Edgar read this letter, he felt rising in him the old, nervous, unappeasable hatred, the frantic exasperation, which had poisoned the latter half of his married life and which since his divorce he had fought down and kept under until he thought it dead. His whole organism was shaken by a crisis of nerves and heart, racking, exhausting.

He could see her writing that note, after nine years of silence,—see her sitting crouched across a table, with her hand dashing and flying along, see the feline puckers coming and going at the corners of her eyes, see the viperine twist of her thin mouth, the same mouth which could poison and madden his very soul with adroit word-arrows, which had in other, younger, years softened in speaking to him, which had promised him love.

For three years they had been in love, more in love

than other couples, exaltedly, poetically. For another year he had loved her, after she grew indifferent, and she had derived amusement from teasing him. Then his anger broke out, and it was so fierce that it drove her to defend herself by new and cunning assaults, refined tortures. She had known him so well that when she turned traitor she could pierce his last defenses with half-a-dozen words. He felt himself being dragged down, whether by her or by himself, and hated and blamed her while he sank: he was brutal to her, and yet he often felt as if the man who so disgraced himself under the torture was not, in some way, Edgar Marriott:—or as if Edgar Marriott were not responsible for what he did. He had never broken down her spirit or her power to wound him. At times they had looked into each other's eyes with the tireless fury of two discarnate evil spirits.

All during this period of tension, he had been driving himself ruthlessly in his career. While still in the legislature he had sprung into national prominence as the advocate of radical reforms. His bills had, indeed, been defeated, and he had not been reëlected; but he had won strong backing, in the press and public, and he was in line for a United States senatorship. His campaign was under way, and he was touring the district, speaking with dazzling success, sweeping through the opposition, followed by reporters who spread his utterances broadcast. This was the moment which Naomi chose to bring suit against him for divorce. There was a scandal which made Edgar Marriott's name more odious than it had ever been famous. He fought on against the inevitable for a day or two, until he was fairly hissed off the platform by an audience which he tried to address.

This had been the catastrophe of his life, final and complete. Nervous prostration followed, and after the acute attack he never recovered his control or the equilibrium of his forces. His frame, always too weak for his will, made clear its inadequacy for active life, by betraying him in a

variety of ways, one after another. He finally came to look on himself as a valetudinarian, practically a living dead man, who could retain his friends only through pity.

Naomi had too little concern with conventions to pretend she wanted the custody of her son, so Eddie was left on the hands of Edgar, who isolated himself in his own father's house.

Through what years of mental pain he had fought his way back to poise and mental, if not physical balance, cannot be described. He schooled himself, wrestled through his blackest hours alone, drove his thoughts outward rather than inward. For the routine of life he was now prepared, and the one weakness he still had to reckon with was the antagonism between his temperament and his son's, their undeveloped power of love, and their misunderstandings.

Naomi's letter, telling and boasting that she had remade her shattered life, offering sympathy either false or true, throwing off bits of analysis of an annoying penetration, her intimate, colloquial letter, had the old power to poison him. It was days before he became outwardly calm.

Meanwhile Eddie and he were thrown together in the empty house. As he had dreaded, they quarreled desperately over some matter of discipline; Edgar was unjust, Eddie obstinate; the boy cried half the night.

At eleven the next morning he presented himself at Edgar's door.

"Back from school already?" asked his father, wearily.

"Back for good. Here's a note from Dr. Jewett."

The note asked Mr. Marriott to be so good as to withdraw his son from the school, owing to his recent unfortunate conduct—which was both impudent and obstinate, and which spread a mutinous spirit subversive of all discipline.

"What was the unfortunate conduct?" asked Edgar.

"Oh, I jawed old Baxter and refused to recite, and called

him all manner of names, and they tried to make me apologize publicly and I wouldn't. That isn't the point; I did it on purpose; it was no pleasure to me. I was trying to get fired."

"Oh, you were!" exclaimed Edgar, his anger rising even above his mortal weariness.

"I've got to get out of this, Dad: I can't stand it. You must send me away to school."

"M-m," said Edgar. "You think we can't get along?"

"It's just hell here," said Eddie, sullenly.

"I don't suppose you ought to live in hell."

Eddie darted a look to see if his father was speaking ironically, but he was serious.

"Do you think you could hold your own at boarding-school?"

"I can tell you that after I try."

"You've a gracious way with you, Eddie."

Eddie bit his lip. He had determined not to quarrel with his father again that day.

"You think we'll get on better if we separate for a while?"

Eddie nodded. "We couldn't get on worse."

"Eddie," said his father, painfully, "I've been acting like a lunatic lately. It's only fair to you to tell you you're not the person I'm angry at. I can promise you that it will never be again as it's been the past week."

"Dad . . ."

"Well?"

"Some day will you tell me what really happened between you and Mother?"

"Some day . . . perhaps . . . I don't see the point."

"I've always thought it can't have been all your fault——"

Edgar was touched. "Whose story have you heard?" he asked.

"Only Rhoda's. She's very fond of you, but she doesn't make a very good case for you."

"I don't believe anybody could, Eddie. It was a bad business. All the same, I'm tremendously glad you think it wasn't all my fault . . . because in a certain sense . . . it wasn't . . . No, I don't believe I can ever tell you what really happened . . . but you're a brick to think that, after the way I've treated you."

"I'm sort of . . . the same way."

"You uncanny little chap! . . . I say, Eddie, we'll have to try all over again. There's no reason why we shouldn't get on. Perhaps if we talked things over more . . ."

"Oh, dad! do let me go away to school!"

"The first minute we've ever talked sensibly together?"

"It—it won't last."

"No," said Edgar to himself. "Well, we'll try to get you in somewhere. It won't be too easy, after Jewett has fired you; but it can be arranged some way. I'll write to Appleby at St. Stephen's."

That evening, after writing the necessary letters, Edgar sat by the fire and thought about his son. The poor boy was already old in some ways; cursed with a perverse, sullen temper, brought up among the wreckage of a broken home. And yet by some unrequited effort of tenderness, he had interpreted and excused his father.

It made Edgar want to cry.

VIII

A DAY or two before his departure, Eddie made a pilgrimage to Hickory Place, for a parting with his liege lady. He thought of her for perhaps two-thirds of his waking hours, and dreamt interminable adventures by night, in which she figured,—he wearing armor or a Spanish cloak, and enacting tragic scenes wherein he suffered death for some lost but superb cause, while she rode a white horse with a sweeping mane, and spoke Elizabethan English.

The true chivalrous spirit informed these romances. They never ended in the personal possession of the goddess, in fact they never ended at all, but disappeared down vistas of memory. Through all his sufferings and achievements Diantha fluttered before him, above him—ethereally bright, remote and merciful.

He found her on the front steps, playing "jacks" with a young friend. A hollowness made itself felt in his being when he saw her, but it passed off, and they talked of indifferent matters until the friend went home.

"Did you know I was going away to school?"

"No. Where? When?"

"St. Stephen's—day after to-morrow."

"My, you'll be homesick."

"I don't believe so."

"Won't your father be lonesome without you?"

"Very likely. He's brought it on himself. He's been awfully mean."

It was Diantha's fate to be the recipient of confidences, at this period, from her colt-like young relatives, without ever losing the faculty of being shocked. Her eyes grew quite round.

"Oh, Eddie, your father is *so* nice. I'm sure you misunderstood him about something. He couldn't do anything mean."

"Not to you, he couldn't. Nor to most people. But he hates me, you know, because I remind him of my mother."

"How silly——" began Diantha, before remembering the few words Cousin Edgar had spoken to her about hell.

"Well, it's true. I don't think you know everything about my father and mother."

"I don't suppose I do."

"Diantha . . . if you ever do hear the story from anybody . . . I wish you'd tell me . . . I think I could get on better if I knew what really happened; but of course nobody will talk to me about it."

"All right, Eddie, but they won't talk to me either, most likely. Tell me about where you're going to school."

"I expect I'll have a rotten time." Eddie's brow furrowed. "I don't get on with fellows very well."

"You must try to be nice, and take an interest in games."

"You know I can't play games, Di; they bore me to death."

"Nobody will like you if you keep to yourself and tell them just what you think."

"Well then, they needn't like me. I'm not obliged to put myself out for them any more than they are for me."

"Eddie, you're a rather cross sort of boy."

"I'm born cross, I don't act that way on purpose."

"Mamma says to us to keep still when we can't think of anything pleasant to say."

"That sounds good," said Eddie, scornfully, who knew his own lead-colored familiar imp, against whose resistance he had developed his spiritual muscles in more wrestling-bouts than Diantha's pliant soul could comprehend.

"Eddie," said Diantha, with great seriousness, for she took her rôle of Mother Confessor much to heart, "when we came to live here we made all new friends. None of them knew what we were like. So long as we acted nice they thought of course we were nice. Mat's had two or three fights lately, but up till then it was splendid. You ought to try to be that way when you start at your new school."

"Of course I ought."

"*Will* you?"

"Sure——"

"I shouldn't wonder if it would be the best thing that ever happened to you."

Some such thought was in Eddie's own mind, and at all events he was following his own judgment in going away.

Nevertheless his trip East was far more melancholy than his worst days at home. He was leaving a record of failures, quarrels, bitterness, which augured little success in his new venture, and the strength of his character appeared to him as his greatest handicap; it was what had brought him into collision with all constituted authority, and if he could have sloughed it off in the station he would have felt he was starting to school with better chances of success.

He had sworn that from that day forth he would not shed tears in public or in private; and this resolve caused a continuous exertion of will-power. As the train fled across gray fields soggy with half-melted snow, and darkened the skies with the fleer of smoke, he thought of his quarrels with Edgar, one after another; of his grandfather, intervening with troubled face to protect him from unkindness, and again lying helpless in bed, a few days before his death—his hand barely closing on Eddie's young paw, the pleasant smile almost erased by lethargy, his eyes compassionate and dim . . .

He remembered sitting on the floor in his mother's room, a small, small boy, playing with her mirror and hair-

pins while she told him stories in a thrilling, minor-keyed voice. The stories had ceased, and he, enchanted, had stumbled to his feet and clutched one of her knees as she stood at the window, demanding further entertainment.

"No, I'm tired, go away," she had said brusquely. He had set up a coaxing wail; and then she had slapped him tinglingly on the cheek so that his head buzzed.

"Get out of here," he had heard her say. "*Must* I be bothered to death?"

. . . So he held his head rigid against the green plush cushions of the train, staring without flinching at the people who staggered along the aisle, and dared them to guess that he was miserable.

Eddie was far from normal, but if it be normal to live without feeling excess of emotion, few children come in the normal category.

IX

For the rest of that winter Edgar, to occupy himself, inaugurated certain Saturday-morning parties, which closed in sumptuous luncheons. Mat and Diantha were bidden, Fan, and occasionally Josie. The real purpose of these gatherings was supposed by the children to be the repast; but in Edgar's breast they were known as the meetings of a debating society. They were thus ordered: a large box of caramels was always provided. Half an hour before luncheon Edgar would propound a question which had occurred to him, and lure Fan and Mat into a discussion of it. By tacit understanding, Diantha was the referee, and she listened acutely through the debate, which often continued till the end of lunch. Then it was her prerogative to present the box of caramels to the contestant who had convinced her. The recipient was wont to pass the candy among the guests, after which he was free to carry the remainder home as spoil of victory.

Edgar put forth all his ingenuity in the choice of questions. He was apt to propound certain popular prejudices,—religious, political, racial, social,—and tempt the boys craftily into taking a stand which he later forced them to justify or abandon. He found them both inclined to a conventional standpoint, partly from inexperience; but Mat took his baits more eagerly. Mat's conventions were different from Fan's, inclining as they did to radicalism; but it was a radicalism swallowed whole, in some feast of pamphlets.

"Natural resources," he would say grandly, "should be the property of the State. Private exploitation . . ."

"Why, Mat? Why shouldn't the men who have the

courage and enterprise to develop natural resources, profit by them?" Edgar would ask, guilefully.

And Mat did not know. He was often annoyed by Cousin Edgar's double-faced logic, and after he went to bed at night he would revolve arguments in his mind which might have crushed the enemy. (These salubrious post-mortems were most likely to occur after the days when Fan carried home the caramels.)

Fan was the more generous antagonist of the two; but one day even his seraphic qualities were tried beyond endurance. It was an occasion when Josie was present, and lent her counsel to Diantha in the award.

Restriction of immigration had been the theme, and it so happened that Fan had thrown open these United States to the oppressed of every land, with more eloquence than usual. Mat, on the contrary, was concerned over the lowering of the standard of living, and favored certain judicious limitations—left rather vague—in the interests of those who had already passed Ellis Island or Plymouth Rock. He, too, had soared somewhat; the morning had, in fact, been a lively one, and Edgar had had hard work to keep his face straight.

When it came to a decision Diantha, as always, was torn asunder. Abstract justice was complicated by the following considerations, mutually contradictory:

1. Mat was her brother. She adored him.

2. Mat was her brother. She must not show favoritism.

3. Fan was the natural gainer under consideration No. 2, but,

4. Fan was also her idol, and bashfulness forbade her revealing this romantic preference by giving him caramels.

It is to be feared that the weight of argument, one way or the other, swayed her thirteen-year-old judgment rather lightly.

Now Josie was not of so punctilious a stamp. The discussion had seemed to her to be compounded of that bore-

someness which is the native air of grown-up discourse, and the pitiful inadequacy which attends the thinking of one's younger relations. But two points were quite clear to her:

1. Mat was a Poor Relation.

2. Fan was her only brother, and he lived on the Lake Shore Drive.

She therefore strongly advised Diantha, who was wearing her—Josie's—last winter's Peter Thompson dress, to give Fan the caramels. Diantha's inclination was to do the contrary of what Josie wished, but being young, weak and humble, she was talked down, and Fanning received the trophy gracefully at her hands.

She looked repentantly at Mat, and he looked truculently toward Cousin Edgar; but that sagacious person stared at the end of his cigar.

"If I wasn't your brother," said Mat in a low tone to Diantha, "you wouldn't *dare* give me a raw deal like that. It was framed up between you and Josie and Fan."

"No, no, truly it wasn't, Mat. We meant to be fair."

"Yes, I guess. Just because Fanning's got a wave in his front hair."

At this point Josie interposed.

"Well, Mat, just because you're ugly it doesn't follow you've got all the brains."

"What's the matter?" asked Fanning.

"Mat thinks he didn't get a square deal," piped his sister.

Fanning flushed. He had been impressed with his own eloquence, and had received the candy as a rightful tribute to intellectual force.

"It's a poor sport that can't take the judge's decision when it goes against him," he said, bitterly.

"Oh!" said Mat. "I suppose a good sport is a person that gets licked in an argument and then takes a box of caramels for it."

"Licked!" cried Fan . . .

Three seconds later a porcelain crashed to the floor, dislodged from its teakwood base by the impact of two hurtling bodies. A fist smacked against a jaw. Feet trampled on the Brussels carpet.

The girls huddled out of the way, and turned scared eyes to Edgar, who had with difficulty detached his gaze from the cigar. For another three seconds he watched the fracas.

"*Boys!*"

The metallic voice cut them apart like a blade. They stood panting and sheepish, eyeing him sidelong. Silence reigned absolute for perhaps half a minute.

"Next week," said Edgar in a dry tone, "we will discuss the relation of force to the maintenance of justice. Allied to this will be the question whether it is wise for me to introduce caramels into my house."

For that day, at least, the caramels went home with nobody. The boys shook hands in the hall, and escorted their respective sisters back to the North Side with all convenient speed.

Edgar laughed at intervals all the rest of the day.

PART II

I

In the spring of 1909 a certain piece of Edgar's property was brought to his attention by its tenant's unforeseen departure. It was the farm which had been his legal residence in the days when he sat in the Legislature,—an old farmhouse, as age is reckoned in Illinois, pretentiously remodeled under Naomi's supervision, with several hundred acres of land lying on the rolling slopes back of the Smoke River. It was five miles from a county seat, and in the days of horse-drawn station-wagons, three hours from town; and though Naomi had occasionally enjoyed writing poetry in the orchard, or entertaining week-end guests, it had outgrown any happy associations for her or her husband. For years it had been rented to an intelligent theoretical farmer, and when Edgar thought of it at all he congratulated himself that his country neighbors were being incited to prosperity by the view of Higgins' bumper crops.

When Higgins perversely became fascinated by oil-wells, just after getting in the spring wheat, Edgar, who knew nothing of farming, was struck with an odd desire to harvest those crops. The resolution was taken in three minutes: he would engage a capable manager, spend the summer on his farm, and keep open house for his young relatives.

The plan was less simple to execute than to conceive, for he realized that to hold the young people on the premises he would have to provide other than intellectual amusements. He put money into motors, horses and boats,

had the tennis-courts rolled much more thoroughly than suited the convenience of the aged gardener, who did not play tennis himself, and renewed his lapsed membership in the Egmont Country Club.

Eddie was "back on his hands," as he put it. In spite of ups and downs, his career at St. Stephen's had not been unsuccessful, and his disposition had certainly improved. He had even formed intimacies with a few bold spirits, and although he was not a popular idol had passed a high average of happy hours.

His downfall had come owing to an investigation into the comparative effects of opium and hashish, conducted at his instigation by four inquirers in an old barn. He had been on the highroad to the Sixth Form, and it caused him momentary pain to leave the school; but while yet in the taxi which conveyed him to the station, he weighed academic restrictions and found them a drag on character development. Art was his mistress. His disloyalty to her was now at an end.

When he appeared, unheralded, at his father's breakfast table, Edgar was pleased with his bearing. He had grown taller, "though still nothing remarkable," as he said; and his face was strongly stamped with individuality, from the continuous eyebrows to the blunt, ugly mouth, which had developed some flexibility in smiling.

"You don't know me from Adam, dad," he said, after briefly explaining the misfortune of his presence. "I'm here to surprise you."

He poked his chin corner-wise into the air,—the recurrent family gesture,—settled his tie, and eyed his parent truculently.

"Maybe I've changed, too," said Edgar. "At any rate I don't feel like fighting till I've digested my breakfast. We can spend the next ten years of our lives getting acquainted, as you seem to have cut yourself off from further education."

"I say, Dad, what would you like me to take up?"

Edgar shook his head. "My child, I'm too old to let myself be entrapped that way. You needn't tell me you came home without plans of your own. My rôle, I see, is to thwart them."

Eddie was not too proud to grin at this. "Well, then, I mean to be an animal sculptor."

"All right," said Edgar.

"A symbolical animal sculptor."

"Very well. Define same. Like hippogriffs and unicorns?"

"Perhaps I mean an imaginative animal sculptor."

"Then perhaps you mean a *good* animal sculptor."

"I think I mean conventionalized—decorative—architectural——"

"Let's get at it from the concrete. What man does the kind of sculping you mean?"

"Nobody," replied Eddie, haughtily.

"When are you going to start?"

"Day after to-morrow."

"Why procrastinate?"

"I've got to see some people first." The "people" Eddie had to see consisted of one young lady in First Year High School, who lived on Hickory Place.

"All right," said Edgar. "I'll stake you to a studio when you get that far, and I suppose you'll want a bow tie and a tam-o'-shanter. Charge them to me. I can't remember that art has ever run in the Marriott family before."

"I think Mat Powell has a sort of an artistic temperament."

"Well, he takes after Vesey."

"Perhaps I take after my mother."

"Yes, you do in some ways."

"Dad, do you believe in heredity or environment?"

"In most cases heredity makes environment, don't you think?"

"I'm a different man at school from here."

"But how do you know your heredity didn't determine your going to that school? . . . Oh, here we are at Predestination and Free Will. Pour me out another cup, there's a good old chap."

* * * * * *

When Edgar came to consider his farmhouse, he learned that it was in radical need of redecoration; and so long as Eddie had branched off into Art, his father thought him a suitable director of operations. Eddie had no training in decoration and little in color, but his estimate of his powers was high enough to keep him from hesitating. He spent a day at Redgate Farms, and came back boisterous.

"Dad, how much money would you be willing to put into furbishing up the place?"

"Well, I judge it will take upwards of a thousand."

"Give me ten thousand and I'll make it a dream."

"Ah!" said Edgar, startled. "That *is* a dream."

"Very well. If you're just going to put on new white paint and bedroom wall-paper, you can get a contractor to do it."

"That was about what I'd expected, only I thought as you were going to live in it you might not feel it beneath your dignity to instruct the contractor briefly."

"Dad, let me show you what I've planned . . ." A pocketful of papers appeared. "The site is the classical example of a missed opportunity . . . Now, you remember, the house faces west, near the top of the hill, and looks up and down the river and across the valley. And the front is all covered with porte-cochères, and a great ugly gravel-drive takes up the whole sweep of the lawn. There's no privacy on that side . . . Now you remember the highroad is just over the crest of the hill, and the drive comes over *here* . . ."

"Your mother and I planned the grounds while we were engaged."

"Well, you could have done a better job. Now look: my first idea is to change the entrance . . . Not to the back, because that's where the orchard is, and that's delightful. But to this end. Then you see there'd be very little of the lawn touched by the drive, and it could go back to the stables through *here*."

"In my young days, we wanted people in surreys to drive through our grounds and admire everything. And my mother reveled in those porte-cochères, because people could see them all up and down the valley."

"The house is a nice old house," said Eddie dogmatically. "It sits tight to the ground, and it has a good roof. But those things must be scraped off."

"Very well, son."

"Now look at the floor-plan. We put an entrance here, through the drawing-room, and a coatroom at either side. The old entrance we block up, and make into a study for you, with long windows on the terrace."

"Oh. The terrace."

"Yes, a stone terrace where we can sit and admire the sunsets."

"And what do we put over our heads when it rains?"

"When it rains we go inside . . . Here's the music-room—no change there. The dining-room where it always was, the kitchen back of it—Now this room . . ."

"My sacred office . . ."

"Yes. Look how the ground slopes. We take advantage of that to build on and make an enormous living-room, looking west and south, with a stage at the east end, and three or four little dressing-rooms in here."

"Lord! I suppose there's a minstrel's gallery at the other end?"

"There could be," replied Eddie seriously. "But that would be more the old English wainscoted idea. I want this to be simple and cheerful and inexpensive, like a real farmhouse."

"A real farmhouse," murmured Edgar.

"You see, except for the living-room, there are only two or three partitions to change, and a few openings to cut and a few others to block up. The bedrooms will do very well, with just a couple more baths . . . I thought we might put a bowling-alley down in the basement . . . Now the grounds . . ."

"Oh, deary me."

"You see at the top of the orchard, here, where there's a tremendous view, we'll put in a colonnade and a swimming-pool. . . . This part is all right . . . The vegetable gardens will do well enough . . . The stone wall around the orchard is pretty tumble-down, but that's a small matter . . . But *here* . . . where the ground dips . . . we'll have a sunken garden. And some cement steps going down to the tennis-court . . . And I thought we might pipe the swimming-pool water down to one or two fountains on the side-hill, like at the Villa d'Este."

"Eddie, you're going a little crazy. Do you know how much money you've spent since you began talking?"

"I'll bet ten thousand would cover it."

"It would take twenty-five, or I'm a blaspheming Jew. You must think I'm a richer man than I am."

"I'd like to get figures on it."

"Tell me, Eddie, will you live there after it's fixed? Your mother and I never got back our money's worth in pleasure out of that place."

"You bet I'll live there! It will be a paradise!"

There was more argument, at the end of which Edgar underwrote his son's reconstructions to the amount of five thousand dollars, with the chance of another five if the results seemed to warrant it.

Edgar wondered whether he was spoiling Eddie. Certainly it was the essence of "spoiling" to alternate unreasonable lavishness with irrational severity. Eddie, however, was at present his favorite plaything. The boy had developed out of recognition, and had made his father respect his judgment.

Edgar's notions of money had always been free-and-easy, as he had never lived on the fruit of his own toil; and he cared nothing for the training of the school of hardship. Spending one's life-blood to gain a subsistence seemed to Edgar slightly degrading,—why, he could not have said. True, many of his friends had been poor men, but their poverty was a bit unfortunate; a man,—or his ancestors,—showed some weakness when he could not maintain himself in accordance with his tastes.

Whatever may have been the exact psychology of the thing, Edgar could see no reason for withholding money from Eddie when Eddie had a more or less rational use for it. He had not withheld from others: Mat Powell was at that moment enjoying the privileges of a freshman at Chicago University through his free and unostentatious gift. Edgar would never amass a great fortune, as his brother had done in spite of the demands of his growing family; but it may be safely said that there never was a man whose wealth or want of it caused him less anxiety. He made, at least in this his two-and-fortieth year, no vain pretensions; he simply accepted his share of his father's estate as a natural means of expressing his personality.

Power went to Eddie's brain for the next few weeks. He dropped the art-school and lived at Redgate, conducting discussions with his father by long-distance telephone. In the end he screwed several extra thousands out of him, and launched into a program modified only by the omission of a few fountains, cascades, sunken gardens, and ornamental flights of steps, and by some simplifications in the house-plan. The colonnade above the swimming-pool was a vexing problem, as the estimates ran high, and he could not allege any useful purpose it would serve. Edgar was all for omitting it, but Eddie's heart was fixed. It was to serve as a back-screen for a statue he intended to model, which he already saw reflected in the waters of the future pool,—a little nymph, straight and slim, with her

hand on the mane of a wicked leopard. The nymph bore a likeness to Diantha, and the leopard was a spiritual portrait of Eddie.

One day he called up. "Dad! I've got my colonnade!"

"You mean you've ordered it and I'll pay for it."

"Not a bit! The whole thing, from base to pediment, is being stuck together out of the old porte-cochère. It only means a cement foundation and a little carpenter work and a coat of paint."

"Good enough. It'll have to be repainted every spring, but I suppose it's going to be extra beautiful. By the way, are you sure this place will be ready for company the twenty-first of June? Because that's when the company's due to arrive."

"Oh, practically," said Eddie, hanging up.

If Edgar could have seen his child at that moment, he would have despaired of his house party. Eddie had conceived the project of casting his statue in plaster and setting it up for the grand opening, and this sublime idea necessarily withdrew some of his attention from the structural and decorative alterations he was supervising. His tweeds were smeared with clay, and for hours each day he stamped about his modeling-stand, biting at a manly pipe. Sometimes, staring like a hypnotic subject, he managed to see his figures as he meant them to be; but his limitations became daily clearer to him, and he plowed with unclean fingers through anatomy text-books, or reconstructed his armatures, pushing his way through dense technical thickets toward the goal.

II

As the vernal equinox drew near, and the telephone pressed for details, Eddie detached himself from his sculpture to superintend the workmen a bit. He had wasted some days, and further, he had laid out impossibilities for performance in two months. As he argued with the contractor, his sense of power faded into a looming cloud of responsibility, and from feeling at least twenty-five, he became a tremulous thirteen.

"*Am sending out maids,*" said a telegram. "*Meet them four-fourteen.*"

And Eddie, who had not yet provided a chauffeur, got out the Ford station-wagon, and went down to the village for them.

"You'll have a good deal of cleaning to do," he said apologetically, as their bell-wether followed him through rooms apparently swept by tropic cyclones. "I want all these bedrooms put in order by Friday, and these curtains hung, and these valance things on the beds, and—you know, fix it up and give it a touch of home."

The flock made merry in the kitchen wing over their master's orders, but they good-naturedly did what they could.

On Friday, Edgar was to drive out in the new touring-car, bringing with him Mat and Diantha. Fanning was to motor over from Lake Forest in his emerald-green roadster,—these four preceding two or three older guests who were due to appear the following day.

Eddie had tea ready in the big room at five, but it cooled and they came not. He toured the house and grounds seven or eight times, observing lacunæ and remedying the remediable. For example:—

"Agnes!" he shouted down the back hall.

"Sir."

"Where are the wash-cloths?"

"There ain't any, sir. No, sir. I spoke to you about it yesterday, the same time I asked you to get a colander and some paring-knives and a carpet-sweeper."

"Oh!" said Eddie, hoping the family would bring their own sponges. Perhaps after dinner he could slip away to Egmont and bring back a few necessaries.

The big room pleased him fairly well. Except for a few cushions over which he had draped loose lengths of chintz to obtain certain last-minute color effects, it was nearly complete; and he counted on its creating a sensation. The floor, the dado, and the woodwork were a deep, brilliant blue enamel. The ceiling and frieze were calcimined a golden green, the walls were painted a delicious clear, creamy yellow. Curtains and rugs were of the most brilliant imaginable plum color, bordered with lines of blue and yellow. The mantel was painted blue and plum color, and was ornamented with a flat jade bowl at either end, and a beautiful alabaster figurine in the middle. Some of the furniture was painted yellow and some green. The tea-table was plum colored, set out with white Wedgewood and silver, and well after the hour of tea he forbade the removal of the things, which were essential notes. Larkspur stood in white Satsuma jars, white peonies in a brass bowl. Through the windows gleamed the powdery gold refulgence of late afternoon across the valley, while the little stage,—opening as it did on the orchard through a series of latticed casements,—lay in cool eastern light.

Dinner was ready long before the motor appeared on the drive. To Eddie's great disappointment, the one desire of the passengers was to wash and eat before seeing any of the sights, and he was obliged to sit through dinner with what patience he might, in a dining-room which was unchanged, except for clean paint.

Fan telephoned that he had been delayed until the next day, when he would drive Mr. and Mrs. Gurney over with him.

"Eddie," said his father, "you take the young Powells around your zoo, and let me poke about the house by myself. I'm all in, and I can't climb any mountains tonight."

"We'll just go around with you, Cousin Edgar," said Diantha. "There'll be plenty of time for outdoors tomorrow." If Edgar had planned to be alone while laying ghosts, he was thwarted: but after all, the ghosts had been mostly exorcised with plum-colored paint.

"You *must* see the living-room while it's light," said Eddie, trembling with excitement now that the parade was really under way.

"Gee!" Diantha exclaimed from the doorway. The saffron twilight trailed across the horizon, and Eddie's color scheme profited by the half-light.

"I'd never know it," murmured Edgar, for once surprised out of his bantering poise. "I'm really astonished."

Both Edgar and Mat were attuned to respond to the powerful color notes which gave Diantha the giggles. At that time she pined for a boudoir in gray satin and rose brocade, with chiffon lamp-shades.

"So those are the old Windsor chairs. I barely recognize them."

"Yes, and this is a plain, ordinary kitchen table."

"Very nice, very nice. Yes, I think I can live here now."

"Good stuff, old Eddie," said Mat, slapping his shoulder. "Lead on."

He conducted them through the rooms of the main floor and then out on the terrace, hoping their curiosity would lure them up the hill; but they found themselves very comfortable in the wicker chairs he had provided, and could not be budged. It was an odorous June evening; the

darkening of the valley and the advent of the infrequent stars proceeded with ceremonial beauty.

"I do wish——" Eddie began: but his voice failed before anyone had paid attention.

"It's heavenly to be here," said Diantha, stretching her young legs in front of her. "Hickory Place is pretty public in summer, isn't it, Mat?"

"All the Dagoes go down to the lake that way," Mat explained.

"While you're here you must forget town and school and home and everything else but fresh air," said Cousin Edgar. "You need fresh air."

He thought Diantha needed also a little of nature's simplicity. She wore a pompadour and two cheap bracelets, and called all good things "dandy" and all bad ones "smelly"; and she had lost some of the quaint precision of her accent. It would do her good to be away from Hickory Place for a few months.

The entire evening passed without any move being made away from the terrace, except upstairs to bed.

"You win with that terrace," said Mat. "You might have left off the house altogether: nobody's going to want to go into it."

Eddie made a long pilgrimage up the hill by starlight, to gaze at his beloved colonnade against the wide sky, at the slowly-filling pool, and at the white plaster model of the girl and the panther. Everything was as he had planned. For half an hour he sat worshiping before his goddess.

The next morning Edgar was late to breakfast, having risen early to take a quiet, uninterrupted stroll. He was delighted with Redgate Farms as they now met the eye, and his tutelary genius informed him that he was to find peace there.

"But where," he asked, coming out on the terrace where the table was set, "where did you get that old eyesore

you've stuck up between the pool and the pillars? The woman's got two knee-pans on one leg."

Poor Eddie mumbled something. He was struck with sickness and suffering in that instant, and the day turned to ink.

"You must take a look at it," Edgar continued to the Powells. "It's really rare. We'll get something pretty and put there; you hit the location to a T, and the whole scheme's a great improvement. Be sure you all look at the statue, though; it's priceless."

It never occurred to him that Eddie had had time to create statuary while supervising all the work on the place; he thought the concrete company had foisted some misbegotten garden ornament on him.

After breakfast, when Mat and Diantha were about to start through the orchard to the pool, Eddie with dreadful eagerness packed them off to the village to buy various commodities against the arrival of Fan and the Gurneys. Then arming himself with a hatchet, he hurried up to the altar, and began desecrating it with frenzied blows.

Edgar heard the sounds, and hoisting himself from his lounge, rambled up through the orchard. At the corner of the path he halted, shocked. Poor Eddie was smiting away at the stump of the image, which lay in chunks and bits over the new turf; his face was ghastly white and twisted, his movements were almost convulsive. Edgar hastily walked away, shaken and sorrowful. Not for worlds would he have wounded the boy. There was nothing to be done, however, and silence was to be preserved.

"Odd, though," he said to himself. "It shows that a chap can decorate houses and lay out terraces by natural genius, and not come any dreadful croppers; but when you sculp, you must found your actions on positive knowledge."

Just before luncheon the green roadster appeared, with Mr. Gurney bouncing among the suitcases in the rumble,

and Mrs. Gurney radiant beside the driver, her large hat adhering to her pompadour through the agency of a sky-blue chiffon veil; and Edgar did the honors with a hospitable zeal he had not felt since the first years of his marriage. Decidedly, Redgate pleased him.

Gurney was a college friend who had ridden the same hobbies with him for years, from prison reform to the forty-eight-hour week. He had gone into business, and lost his first ardor for remaking the world, but he and Edgar still spoke the same language.

Prissie Gurney was now a delightful woman of forty, whom Edgar had known since her dancing-school days, without ever succumbing to her charms. She was by nature a flirt, but a thoroughly good fellow about it, and for the last twenty years she had not tried her wiles on Edgar.

"Well, Di!" exclaimed Fanning, rising from the lunch-table to meet his young cousin, "how are you? Lord, but you're getting pretty!"

Diantha blushed and took her place, confused by the presence of strangers.

"Old Eddie made a ten-strike with his rebuilding, don't you think? Isn't the place bully?"

"It's a peach," murmured Diantha, drooping her shell-like eyelids.

"Very clever," struck in Mrs. Gurney. "Absolutely the new note. I can't think how you hit it right in the middle as you did. Only a very few houses around New York have anything like this, especially the living-room and the entrance-hall."

Eddie blushed in his turn, and admired Mrs. Gurney's discrimination. She chatted with Fanning about the boat race at New London as if she really cared who won. After luncheon he drove her over to the Country Club for golf, and at tea afterward he showed her the picture in the back of his watch, asking her advice in a matter of tactics —namely, How Soon to Write Again. The counsel she

gave him was serious and authoritative, and showed her to be a wise woman.

"I want you to learn to ride, Diantha," said Edgar. "Oh, never mind clothes. Eddie, telephone down to the stable for Barnes to bring up old Topsy with the side-saddle. You boys can take out the other horses. I want you to stick right by her side and pick her up when she falls off."

This should have been exciting enough, but it was not what Diantha had counted upon. She had wanted to play with Fanning, and since he had absented himself, a horse was almost as savorless as a street-car . . . However, the horse was at hand, and Fanning several miles away: so she smiled on her brother and on Eddie, and permitted them to laugh at her while she clutched the pommel and Topsy's reverend mane.

"You ought to get a habit," said Edgar, from the steps. Topsy was sedately circling about the drive.

"Yes," said Diantha, wondering who was to pay for it. Her outfit for the summer had been wrung painfully out of very little cash and a trunkful of Josie's cast-off equipment. One item, in particular, vexed her. She had plenty of white shoes, though no new ones; but Josie's feet were two sizes wider than Diantha's, and the latter young person fancied that the eyes of the world were glued to what she bitterly referred to as the "clod-hoppers" from which her pipe-stem ankles rose. Throughout her visit to Redgate she sat on her feet, twined them about the hind legs of chairs, and otherwise endeavored to abolish them from the visible universe.

She and Mat had a gossip before dinner, while her muscles were stiffening after the ride.

"Eddie's changed a lot, hasn't he?" said Mat, as he took one book after another from the shelves for purposes of examination.

"Yes, and Cousin Edgar's changed when he's with him."

"They tell you money spoils people. I don't see where

Eddie's spoiled, and he's had the spending of a lot of money. . . . You know, Cousin Edgar must be as rich as mud."

"Not rich like Cousin Tolman."

"Well, when you get to slinging money around this way, a little more or less doesn't matter, I suppose . . . You know it's all wrong, Di. It's a ridiculous system that puts thousands of dollars into the hands of a boy of seventeen, to buy Corinthian columns and purple window-shades with."

"Well, you like it well enough when you can sit in the middle of it."

"Right you are, Di. You never see me through rose-colored spectacles, do you?"

For answer she rumpled his long, sleek front hair, and pulled his ear.

"Di, have you been up in Fan's room?"

"No, why?"

"Well, you want to take a look at the photograph on his bureau."

"Oh, indeed?" said Diantha, tossing her pompadour. She had given Fanning one of her pictures the previous Christmas, at his request.

"A queen!" her brother declared. "Go on up now, Di, before he gets back; she's worth looking at."

Realizing that the fondest of brothers would not have so eulogized her picture before her face, she judged it wise to follow his counsel.

"You come along, Matty. I don't want to be caught all by myself in there, peering at a photograph."

The two voyaged to Fan's room and entered. The frame was resplendent chased silver; the picture measured about twelve inches by eighteen, and represented a very beautiful girl with earrings.

"She looks foreign, don't you think?"

Mat's comment was based on the earrings, and on her coiffure, which was severe and faintly rippling close to

the shape of her head, in an age of marcelled pompadours. The eyes were dark and deep-set, and obviously their possessor had wished to appear mysterious and sophisticated; but the greatest charm of her face lay in the inconsistent youthful curve of her cheeks and the corners of her mouth.

"Who do you suppose she is?" Mat pursued. "I'd like to know her. I'll bet a quarter she's interesting."

"Interesting!" Diantha sniffed. "You'd fall for any old freak in earrings. Ladies don't wear them."

"Feminine jealousy," said Mat, derisively. "Show me a girl that'll admit another girl's pretty."

"Men are dreadfully gullible. If a girl's really beautiful, I'll admit it in a second. Look at the nose in that picture!" Be it said that Diantha's nose was an authentic masterpiece which not even the regrettable defects of her flapperdom could quite subdue. "I'll wager she *paints*."

"Well, you powder your perfect proboscis till it's a public scandal."

"Oh, come on, Mat, you know you wouldn't like it if it glistened like a stick of barley-sugar."

Bickering pleasantly, they drifted across the hall to the stair-landing, where there was a bench.

"How do you like Mrs. Gurney?" Mat asked.

"How do you?"

"She's the most charming woman of her age I ever met."

"*Oh!*" cried Diantha, aghast.

"What's the matter?"

"How can you compare her to Mother?"

"Why, she isn't within twenty years of Mother's age."

"Within five, I bet."

They argued this.

"Mother," said Diantha, "is my ideal of a lady."

"Di, you mustn't talk so much about ladies. People don't do it."

"Some people don't know how to *be* it: and lots of people don't seem to recognize it when they see it——"

"Well, what is a lady?"

"A woman that behaves as if she belonged to a nice family."

"Are you one?"

"I hope so"—in a pious tone.

"Well, is Josie one?"

"No."—This they had agreed upon for years.

"Well, why isn't Mrs. Gurney?"

"Oh, I don't say she isn't one, but she isn't refined like Mother."

"At least she's frightfully intelligent."

"You think everybody's intelligent if they butter you enough."

"She didn't butter me."

"Yes, she did; with her eyes."

"Well, perhaps." Mat was none the less pleased.

III

Unquestionably Mrs. Gurney was the belle of Redgate, and Diantha heartily wished she would go home. She was the first example Diantha had encountered of a woman of forty whose chief popularity was among men; and without impugning her morals Diantha wished she had a livelier consciousness of being middle-aged and married. Not only did she join on equal terms, as the young people were incapable of doing, in the long discussions which her husband and Edgar waged in the study; her golf was so excellent that Fan found her a foeman worthy of being his ally, and arranged mixed foursomes in which Mr. and Mrs. Pringle, the paladins of the Egmont Club, bit the dust before them. Mat, to the disgust of his sister, fell completely and abjectly in love.

Eddie was Di's greatest comfort, for he at least was not susceptible where Mrs. Gurney was concerned. These two often rode down the valley,—for Di took but little time to acclimate herself to the saddle,—and exchanged withering comments on "Circe."

"Did you see her? After breakfast? She watched Fan like a hawk while he opened his mail, and then he gave her a look and she gave him a smile, and they rushed away to read his love-letter in the music-room."

"I wonder how the Earring Lady would like it if she knew her letters were picked to pieces by a harpy."

"And old Mat prowling up and down the hall with his hands in his pockets, waiting to read her a piece of poetry, by appointment."

"She says," said Diantha bitterly, "she says to my face, 'Dear child, why don't I see more of you? People have always told me I was a man's woman!' "

"She positively enjoys getting Fan off away from you."

"What do you mean?" cried Diantha, furious. "I don't chase after Fan the way she does."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said Eddie, meaning every word of it. He could see well enough where Diantha's heart lay.

"I don't care about Fan one bit." This sounded overvehement as it hung on the quiet summer air, so she turned the attack. "Don't *you* ever care about anybody, Eddie? Haven't you got any lady's picture on *your* bureau?"

"I have yours," he answered, bantering.

"Oh, bosh. Haven't you ever been in love?"

"Yes, I've been in love." And he shut his mouth tightly.

"Was she in love with you?"

"I'm not the sort of a chap a girl falls in love with, Di," he said; and in spite of her familiarity with him, she dared press her questions no farther. She felt occasionally the force of stark, bitter strength in his character. She thought him without illusions, and it is true he was not subject to the easy glamor of Prissie Gurney, being the victim of an obsession perhaps no better founded.

They rode slowly back along the river path, with the water singing among the roots of the willows; his eyes dwelt on the back of her fair head, dressed smooth and small for the ride. The sunlight splashed gold, silver and flame across it as she moved in and out of the shadow. It was thus that he always thought of her, shimmering with light. As they rode his consciousness was concentrated into something like a prayer, that his wonderful girl might have all her will of the world, and be happy, happy . . . He yearned over her with the intimacy and the remoteness of someone who had died. Unless it would add to her happiness, why should he tell her that he loved her? Yet he knew that this love of his for her was different in degree and in kind from Mat's calf love for Mrs. Gurney, or Fan's infatuation for Anita of the Earrings, or yet Edgar's poisoned and stifled passion for Naomi.

IV

In all, the Gurneys' visit took only two weeks out of the summer, and by the time they left, Diantha had learned some things in spite of herself. For Prissie Gurney, in spite of Di's strictures, was every inch a lady, and her fascinations were quite legitimate. Edgar was pleased to note the disappearance of Diantha's two bracelets, and a greater adhesive quality between her skirts and waists at the back, as well as the return of gracious modulations to her high-school voice. And after Mrs. Gurney's departure Di's social prestige increased. "The competition has been pretty unfair . . ." Edgar said, smiling, to himself. Her place was taken by Josie and two or three of her friends. None of these, however, rivaled Diantha in the eyes of the boys who came and went about the house during this, her first summer of blossoming.

She had not been popular in high-school, where she had acquired the name of Nosy, not because she was inquisitive, but because she carried the feature indicated in a proud manner. She expanded deliciously in the easy, pleasure-seeking atmosphere of Redgate Farms, and with appreciation her charm increased.

Taking a leaf out of the book of Fan's inamorata, she preceded the mode by two or three years, dressing her hair in a plain classic knot. It was brown, with lights of silver and gold, less dark than her straight, fine eyebrows. She tanned to a pleasant cream color, warmed with pink, like a blonde apricot. And the ignominy of wearing Josie's cast-off dresses before her was mitigated by the comparison, daily instituted, between the success of Josie's old clothes on Diantha and her new ones on herself.

Many threads lay in Edgar's hands during those days, and as occasion arose he knotted them into his fabric, almost without the knowledge of the children. Not all his previsions of the summer came to pass: for instance, the debating society utterly failed to reorganize, although Edgar had rather artlessly drawn up a list of new and piquant subjects to propound.

They sat one afternoon about the tea-table, at which Diantha presided daily; and a small dispute arising over the last cocoanut cup-cake brought to Mat's mind the famous boxes of caramels.

"I say, Cousin Edgar, do you remember that crazy little debating club we had one winter at your house?" he said. He was devoting the bulk of his attention to the re-stringing of a tennis-racket, an art in which he pretended to some skill. "And the time Fan and I fit with our fists?"

"And smashed the blue urn?" put in Diantha.

Fan smiled his patronizing sophomore smile, and thrust his hands into his pockets in imitation of his father.

"Not a half bad idea, those debates," he said. "I shouldn't wonder if it started us thinking. Don't you find you have a broader view of life than chaps in your class, Mat?"

Eddie, having been deprived of the gymnastic of measuring wits with his intelligent cousins, permitted himself a laugh. "Darn broad you are, Fan," he jeered. "You wouldn't stick your nose out of your club if Heaven was just across the square."

Fan ruffled at once, and a furrow marked his godlike brow. "I don't see what connection a fellow's mental scope has with his environment."

"If you wanted to be broad, you could hunt up fellows at Harvard that you wouldn't have to patronize intellectually."

"Well," said Fan. "If you happen to want to make friends among your own class, you have to put up with

their characteristic deficiencies. But I tell you I've opened the eyes of more than one of them—talking just the same old stuff that Mat and I used to jaw over, about the tariff and the single tax and uniform divorce laws. Lord, we were funny!"

Edgar, sitting back, listened and learned that the day of debating clubs was past. But the discussion waxed furious, in less formal sessions, starting often from the reading of the daily papers, an early edition of which, lacking all the latest news and filled out with stories about the habits of the woodchuck or the history of jade-carving, made their appearance with the first post. It proved that Mat's early tendency to Radicalism was controlling his development. He described himself as an Eclectic Socialist, and when asked to point out the group of those who thought as he did, he cheerfully admitted that perhaps at any given moment he stood alone, no body of thinkers having sufficient agility to follow his phases.

Eddie, listening for the first time, since he had missed the debating society, was caught at his most impressionable period, and was struck with his indictment of social injustice. Mat's pity for the proletariat, to whom it was his whim to allude as "the dispossessed," became real in his cousin. Eddie read Mat's books, and then out of the bibliographies he drew up new lists of reading which went far beyond Mat's rather showy knowledge. He also pressed home those principles which involved the residence, in luxury, on a hill-top in the middle of Illinois, of half-a-dozen healthy but unproductive citizens. "Capital is jolly pleasant for the people that have it," he said, and condemned his own weakness for continuing to ride horses to whose nurture he had not contributed.

"Sometimes I wake up in the night, Di," he would say, "and by Jove I'm terrified of hell. I see so clearly that these things don't belong to me, and yet I go on using them. It's moral suicide—don't you see?"

Diantha would push her horse up alongside of Eddie's so that she could pat his hand protectively.

"You're not responsible till you get to be of age, poor little Eddie. Take all the training you can while you're a boy. Every socialist is willing to have young men get training; and the only way you can get it at present is through your grandfather's money. When you're twenty-one you'll be able to do something that counts in the world, but now isn't the time."

Diantha had puzzled out this answer during wakeful hours, for she took herself as seriously as ever in her capacity of monitor. She did not know what angelic sanction attached to admonitions framed by her lips, and accompanied by the direct look of her eyes. It was she who, gilding indifferent logic with her divinity, kept Eddie from fleeing the corruptions of capital and making his own way, when he first "got religion."

Fanning meanwhile pursued his way more conservatively toward the future. He treated the other boys kindly, but held securely to his faith—as he was fond of saying—in Evolution rather than Revolution. Edgar was forced to listen to long speeches from Fanning, anent legislation, education, paternal government, subsidies, and aristocracy, most of which had been familiar to him for twenty-five years, and which were prevented from boring him only by Fan's extreme personal charm.

It is difficult to put into words the likable atmosphere that the boy carried about him, in part due to health and good looks, in part to his friendly ways and clear, hilarious laugh, perhaps in part to a touching confidence in his own correctness. Less clever than either Mat or Eddie, he was far more charming. He could give orders without offense. If an extra cake was wanted for a picnic, Fan was deputed to wheedle the cook. The village baseball nine besought him to pitch for them on the Fourth of July. He was on good terms with the soda-fountain clerks in town, and knew most of the village belles by

their first names within two weeks. They were given to stopping him on the street to take snap-shots of him in the green roadster, a proceeding to which he submitted without self-consciousness. One day Diantha was with him when this tribute was offered. "Here's my girl," he said, seizing her by the elbow. "Take us together." Diantha blushed for five minutes afterward, but Fan paid no attention; it is but fair to say that he neither suspected nor cared who was in love with him, his soul being tossed about by the practiced vagaries of his dark-eyed love on Long Island.

He had written home for permission to make a trip east in August, but this was unaccountably withheld, through Daisy's agency—"Not," as she told Christine, "that I like Diantha Powell more, but that I like Anita de Cray infinitely less;—and Diantha's still so young and green, she can't make more trouble in one summer than I can undo in the fall." The elder Marriotts and Josie were spending the summer largely in the north woods, and the Lake Forest house was closed; so Fan's headquarters remained at Redgate, where he was quite happy.

After making sure that the place possessed sufficient resources to prevent their being bored to death, he invited several of his college friends out, one of whom was fond enough of him to come. This youth remains a joyful memory in the Marriott archives; he distinguished himself. It must be said in extenuation that he was passing through the most trying and unlovable period of a blameless career, that he was connected by blood with the Adams family of Massachusetts, and that he had never been farther West than Worcester. The whole household followed him about, on the lookout for stray gems of comparison which he might make, between Boston and Chicago. He complimented Diantha on "speaking quite prettily," explaining the phenomenon by her Springfield ancestry and early rearing. The Marriott clan, which had regarded itself as Eastern rather than Middle-West-

ern, developed a rampant local patriotism which amused themselves.

Fan freely admitted that his friend was funny, and out of chivalry kept him as much as possible in his own company, that he might not be given chances to add to the legend which was growing up around him.

Unexpectedly to himself, this young exquisite succumbed to Diantha's unpolished charms. He told her as much, and described the struggles he had undergone,—realizing the unsuitability of such an affection,—to avoid speaking of it and perhaps engaging her young heart. Diantha thanked him soberly for the compliment he had paid her, and rushed away to repeat his declaration to the family conclave, which broke up amid shrieks and catcalls. The young Bostonian, let me say in passing, always looked back on his trip West as marking an emotional epoch, and flattered himself he had behaved very well. For he thought, if he had made the effort, he might presumably have kissed her.

Mat was then stimulated into producing one of his friends, with the object of beating Fan's specimen; so he asked out his boon companion, Ames Bicknell, who was devoting the interval between his sophomore and junior years at Chicago to the production of poetry.

The Marriott verdict on Bicknell, a surprisingly tolerant one, was that he would have good stuff in him when he boiled down. "At present," said Eddie confidentially to Edgar, "he's an egregious ass." He wore eyeglasses with a black ribbon, and a Lord Byron sport-shirt—"a combination," Fanning said, "which is likely to make me lose my lunch." No books were quite so modern as the books Ames Bicknell brought in his valise.

"If he'd keep them to himself it wouldn't be so bad," growled Fan, "but if I catch him trying to start another of his rotten old sex discussions with Di, I'll punch his head for him." And Fan did not forbear to point out that during *his* friend's visit, the atmosphere of Redgate, while

stilted, was at least pure. Bicknell believed at this time that the Artist must experience the whole of life—"for the express purpose of talking about it afterward, apparently," said Eddie, in supreme disgust. "I wish you'd put him off the place, Dad."

(Nothing drew the Marriotts closer together than the secret sessions at which they blew off steam in regard to their guests.)

Ames Bicknell's good points were as obvious as his bad ones. He had not only a nimble wit and a tongue hung in the middle, but real literary discernment. And though his athletic prowess was limited by lack of early application, he did not sulk alone; he enticed the whole robustious crew into æsthetic pleasures more suited to his capacity. For instance, he read poetry aloud to them at tea: Mat had been commissioned to bid him suit his selections to a conservative taste.

From the moment of entering the living-room, his eye had been filled by the neat little stage, which needed christening.

"May we get up a play, sir?" he asked Edgar.

"Selections from Shakespeare?"

"Ibsen, more likely. I've been looking over Wilde's 'Florentine Tragedy'—it's incomplete, you know, but quite exquisite."

"I suppose Diantha's the heroine?"

"Ah, you're right: she's far from the tragic type."

"Why don't you do some smart little comedy, within your powers?"

Bicknell's brows lifted piteously. "But they're so banal——"

"You think so? Well, write one that isn't."

"You flatter me, sir. I could try, though . . . something whimsy and poetic . . ."

"Whimsy is a noun," said Edgar brusquely.

"Surely you can't think I didn't know whimsy was a noun?—but to me it has an adjectival quality."

"You are the youngest person on this farm," said Edgar, regaining his good humor. "Go off and write your play."

"With our little Diantha for heroine, we're effectively barred from the spice of naughtiness in the text."

"Good Lord, yes."

"It's a limitation, isn't it, sir?"

"It won't hurt you to work under that limitation for once in a way. Writers just as gifted as you have managed to be decent. I'm the Board of Censors."

With no ill humor, Ames agreed to this curb on his powers. Shortly he and Mat decided to collaborate, and spent three days in the orchard, where the death penalty hung over him who should disturb the creative hush.

V

On the third evening, the reading and casting of the piece was to take place.

"There are eight characters," said Ames, adjusting his eyeglass, the better to scan the semicircle of auditors, and giving the manuscript a flip. "They've been written with the available talent more or less in mind. These five men, you see, will be Eddie, Fanning, Mat, myself, and some chap from town to walk on as footman. I thought of Otis; it's not important."

"What is your part?" inquired Edgar.

"I am Sir Clement."

"The hero."

"Oh, no, Fanning's created by nature for a Chocolate Soldier. I am a—a middle-aged philosopher."

"Like me."

"Oh no, sir," said Ames, reassuringly. "I walk around all right." After a pause he blushed. It was the most natural action of his whole visit, and showed he was not beyond hope.

"Well, then, the ladies."

"There's the heroine, Calista; that's the one and only Di. Her rival,—we'll use Sarah Parott. That's a damn good part. The comic aunt,—Fan thinks his sister will come down and do that; she's not very keen about Huron Mountain. We'll wire her at once."

Rehearsals were soon under way, and Eddie fell to painting scenery, while Diantha and Josie labored at costumes. But there were complications.

Ames had rightly judged Diantha's dramatic talent

to be slight, and had written her rôle so that the situations and her pretty face carried her through the heroine's part. But Sarah Parott did not covet the privilege of "wriggling through three acts and then letting Calista step all over her at the finish," as she put it. In short, she felt that the central rôle would have been much better filled by herself than by a scrawny girl like Diantha.

Josie, moreover, when she arrived, found the position of "comic Aunt" not at all to her liking. She was widely recognized as an actress, having taken the part of Sir Andrew Aguecheek at school; and she was willing to be comic; but she felt herself wasted on the crudities of Aunt Jerusha, while the part of Inez was clamoring for a real presentation.

"How simple it would be," said Ames to Mat, after living through two diplomatic *contretemps* with the ladies involved, "if Sarah Parott only happened to want to be Aunt Jerusha!"

"Or if Di did."

"Not a bit of it. Calista is Di's part: it's the only one she'd be any good in, and it suits her to a T."

"I could make Di change in a minute. She doesn't care."

"You will do no such thing. She and Fan will be perfect in the final tableau. Do leave it as it is."

"You can write another 'good-looking' part for Sarah and then we'll move Josie into 'Inez,' and look for a different Aunt Jerusha entirely."

"I'll be damned if I'll toady to them to that degree."

"Then it's up to you to keep them calm: I can't!"

Ames was willing to try; and in fact by the simple expedient of making love to Sarah, he reconciled her to the arduous writhings of her part; and this left no potential vacancy for Josie to fill, so that she was obliged to work up Aunt Jerusha as best she could.

To Diantha these early August days were like a delight-

ful cinematograph turned much too fast. Later she had time to reconstruct her memories, and they were pure gold. For the first time in her life she was in an atmosphere of ease and dignity, as by right; and she was acknowledged queen of Redgate. In the city the friends she had made were not the intimates she would have chosen, for it happened that the pace for her class at school was set by a pretty, vulgar young person too old for her years. Not being willing to shine in competition with this luminary, she had still felt hurt at her lack of popularity, and had in a measure conformed to the taste she despised.

Now, among friends who valued most in her the rare and sensitive qualities which were her birthright, she let them expand, and delighted in herself. Her laughter was often heard about the house, buoyant and irrepressible, but always silvery. It cannot be said that she was a wit, but she was intelligent, and took a fair feminine share in the talk. The boys told her about the pranks with which they enlivened the population of Egmont, and once or twice when their mood and hers fitted for deviltry, she joined them on their escapades, though it must be admitted that Josie was a better tom-boy than Diantha.

The play—which was called "The Lass with the Delicate Air,"—absorbed nearly all their waking hours. From the carriage-house, where Eddie was boiling glue, stretching burlap on frames, and painting from the tops of ladders, to the study where the girls addressed invitations, all of Redgate was involved. The mornings were taken up with fragmentary rehearsals, coached by Ames Bicknell. Every afternoon at three there was a general rehearsal, which usually lasted through tea. The girls sewed industriously on the costumes, and helped Eddie with his calcimine-brushes. Mat was having a facetious program printed in the village.

"It's darned annoying," said Fan, "that I've got this tennis tournament on my hands."

He had, indeed, organized this at the club, and was working his way up through the preliminaries, so that his time and Mat's was doubly burdened.

In the mornings Ames Bicknell was restless without his bridge, and Josie had taken ten lessons from a professional; so they impressed others into the game, and talked over the heads of these unfortunates about mistakes in the play. After one or two experiences with her, they agreed that Di had no card sense; but Sarah was not impossible, and now and then Edgar would play a few rubbers in a disconcerting style of his own, which exasperated the experts by its breezy disregard of the conventions, and yet often verged on genius.

"How can I tell what's in your hand, partner?" Ames would inquire reproachfully. "You began the bidding with four diamonds, and yet I had three honors in my own hand, which you couldn't possibly know. It's sort of upsetting."

"Don't you worry," Cousin Edgar would reply, gazing quizzically at his new hand, which he never took the trouble to sort, "I was playing it, not you. I had a strong feeling those diamonds weren't against me, and anyway I had another idea. Did you notice those low clubs?"

Sometimes he would explain what he had meant by his irregular conduct, more often not; sometimes he discomfited his adversaries, again they reaped great profit from him; but at no time was he what Ames regarded as a satisfactory partner.

Many jokes were current about the final scene of the play, in which, as the script put it, "Lord Bobby takes Calista in his arms, and kisses her squarely on the lips." Diantha enjoyed the rehearsal of this passage, although it was not often considered necessary by Mat, in whom the author warred with the brother. Ames Bicknell, however, had no intention of losing the last piquant effect, and one day when Mat was playing tennis he put

the hero and heroine through repeatedly. Cousin Edgar sauntered in just as matters were approaching their climax.

" 'Have you forgiven me yet for the trick I played on you, Calista?' " said Fanning.

" 'Oh, Bobby, it was the dearest trick in the world!' " replied Diantha.

"Now!" said Ames, dancing before them. "Take a good hold of her. Kiss her the way they do in the movies. Hold it—hold it—while I count fifteen . . . There! Quick curtain!"

Diantha, a deep pink, and Fanning, as cool as a cucumber, turned to ask Edgar's opinion. There was that in his eye,—a malicious spark,—which launched Fan into apologies.

"It's all in the day's work, isn't it, Di? Just like professional actors. You don't really think of it in a personal way at all."

"Of course not," Edgar replied politely. Diantha was piqued.

The valley lay half-dissolved in a lake of amber afternoon light, hot and sweet-scented,—August weather. Reaping-machines were plying like industrious insects across the burnished golden shoulders of the hill-fields, felling the grain in swaths and casting it bound behind them. The river, far below, sent up a dazzle of white fire; the sky stood firmly on its unseen arches, the west illuminated and, as it were, expanded by the imperious bland brilliance of the sun, but modulating eastward to show its walls of deep, transparent blue, a blue almost somber in its intensity.

They sat scattered on the terrace, with their young limbs flung like scarves across the chairs and stone benches. The iced coffee had disappeared, as had the cinammon nut-cakes; but they lingered, in the very fullness of well-being. The graceful ease with which they fitted into the frame of luxury teased Edgar into won-

dering if it were illusory, this goodness and content born of happiness. One might well try it on the world at large, he thought.

Diantha gazed without a focus at the white house wall, carrying a patine of orange and gold in the sunlight, at the spires of larkspur in all shades of blue and violet clustering along its foot, at the warm red-orange flags, separated with lines of grass, at the boys in their flannels, with sunburned brilliant faces and drowsy eyes. She felt August's slow, deep rhythm stirring across the valley. She caught her breath suddenly.

"What is it?" said Eddie, just above a whisper.

"It's too beautiful," she whispered back. "One wants it to last."

"That's heart-break, isn't it? 'Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips, bidding adieu.' "

"I want to save every bit of it to remember . . . in lean years." There was fierceness in her low voice.

"My dear, there are no lean years—for people like you. Beautiful things belong to you."

"My share and no more."

They both stared toward the impenetrable vault of the blue east, and were swayed by their thoughts, the deep thoughts of seventeen, deep because they are new.

". . . And no more," repeated Di, cold with the feeling of fatality.

Eddie looked at Sarah and Josie, clean and pink in their muslins, well-dowered, and impervious to beauty. His Di could make beauty her own, though she might possess no proper shoes. She could distill it, and carry it in a vial between her slim hands, so that its fragrance should surround her.

He fell back upon his favorite rite, of watching her as she lay dreaming in the sun, with the beginning of a smile touching and flitting about her mouth. Voices murmured and fell silent; a laugh would punctuate the musical silence, a slow movement. It was Lotus Land.

VI

On this very afternoon the spell was broken over the Enchanted Hilltop, as Ames Bicknell had called it; and never again did they recapture the idyllic golden ease, the content that pervaded this summer at the beginning of life.

"One and another of us has been happy since," said Mat, writing to Diantha from Verdun, "but not like a merry-go-round of good little angels who entered Paradise before they had time to live on earth."

. . . "Long-distance call for Mr. Mat."

Mat lounged to the telephone.

"Hello!"

"Chicago calling Mr. Marriott Powell—Hold the wire. There you are—ready with Egmont!"

A fine thread of voice came through the receiver.

"Is that you, Mat? It's Mother."

"Hello, Mother. How are you? Is everything all right?"

"I want you and Diantha at home, dear. I wish you'd plan to come at once."

"Of course we will. What's the trouble? Is Herby sick?"

"No, it's your father. Business trouble. I don't want to talk about it over the wire, but it's a difficulty about the Pernambuco Oil Company. I'm afraid it will be in the papers by to-morrow."

"We'll take the morning train in, and be there for lunch. Don't worry any more than you can help," he added with awkward kindness.

"It will be a comfort to have you children back. Give

Cousin Edgar my love; tell him I'm sorry you can't stay longer."

Mat turned away from the instrument, and kicked the hall wainscoting reflectively. His father could not have chosen a more inappropriate time for a business catastrophe, an event not unprecedented, than on the eve of the production of Mat's first play, in which Diantha was to figure as leading lady. But Mat was not one to suffer unduly over pulling himself up by the roots.

"Di," he called to her, and when she stood in the doorway, framed in light, "we've got to go back to town in the morning."

"Father?" she breathed.

He nodded.

She sank down on a chair, her bubble pricked, her whole being suffused with an exasperated, inescapable, groveling shame.

"It's damned outrageous," said Mat, explosively. "Why can't he——"

"Hush, Mat." She glanced toward the open windows. "It'll upset the whole show."

"Yes," she answered miserably . . . "We'd better tell Cousin Edgar right away, hadn't we?"

"Come on up in the orchard, Di. I want to talk things over first."

Silently they climbed the hill path, and sat on top of the wall, where the smell of harvest apples hung in the sunshine.

"I wish to goodness we could stay till Thursday morning instead of Wednesday," Mat said, tentatively.

"It's going to disappoint everybody . . ."

"Of course they can postpone the play . . ."

"You know Ames is leaving, and Sarah has to motor East with her family the first of the week."

"And there's really nobody to take your part."

"Or yours either. And it's your very own play."

"How about asking Cousin Edgar what he thinks? Considering how much depends on us here, we might be

justified in calling Mother and saying we'd be down day after to-morrow."

"I don't know what we'd do after we got there."

"There'll be business conferences . . . There always are . . ."

"It's company Mother wants more than anything."

Over and over they threshed their situation; and clearer and clearer grew their realization of the catastrophe they were bringing on the heads of the Redgate Players.

"I tell you, Di," Mat proposed finally. "This is a matter for us to settle and not anybody else. I don't see why we should ask Cousin Edgar's advice, it will only worry him. Let's just plan to go down Thursday, and call up Mother ourselves to tell her why. She wouldn't want us to go down and spoil everything."

So at length it was determined.

"You call Mother, will you?"

"Oh, Mat, you'd better . . ."

"Well . . ."

* * * * * *

The telephone connection was unconscionably slow, and Edgar, sitting in his darkening study, was almost driven mad by the scuffling of Mat's feet on the hall rugs.

"Hello . . . Hello . . . Oh, Mother . . ."

"What's the matter with the boy?" thought Edgar. "His voice is so constrained."

"How's everything? . . . I wanted to ask if it would make any difference in your plans if we—if Di and I—you see we're getting up a play for to-morrow night—a big thing—lots of people coming—and Di's the heroine—and *I'm* in it too . . . And it would upset everybody's plans completely if we left to-morrow—and we thought—and Cousin Edgar thought—we wondered how important it was for us to get back to-morrow."

In the ensuing pause, Edgar's eyebrows drew down to their satanic angle. Here were strange doings, with something not quite sweet about them.

"All right then: you're a brick, Mother. We'll be down

for lunch Thursday. Is there anything we can do in the meanwhile? Right-o. Good-by."

And Mat walked away, whistling in the excess of light-heartedness.

After dinner, and immediately preceding the dress rehearsal, Edgar was favored with an interview by the two of his young cousins. Di was rouged, and dressed to all appearance in pink sugar-candy; but she looked none the less juvenile and sheepish. Mat was representing an elderly man of the world; and it had seemed good to him to assume a red ribbon across the shirt-front, a monocle, and some whiskers.

"Cousin Edgar," he said; and kicked a footstool.

"Yes."

"We have to go down Thursday."

"Oh."

"Father's got into some sort of business puckersnatch again, and Mother wants us home."

"Too bad!" said Edgar sharply, angry at the unvarying routine of Vesey Powell's obliquity. "Well! is there anything I can do?"

"I don't really know. Mother said to tell you; she said it would be in the papers, but she didn't want to talk about it over the telephone."

"So you're going down Thursday.—Well! we shall miss you."

"Mother wanted us to stay up here for the play."

"Oh, did she? It was nice of her to think of that . . . worried as she must be . . ."

Both the Powells blushed furiously, and hated themselves for blushing.

"You can tell Maxwell to take your trunks down tomorrow night, and drive you over Thursday to the early train. It's too bad . . . too bad you have to go." Within his breast Edgar was thinking, "Perhaps it's time you went after all. Olympus isn't good training for Chicago."

VII

The dress rehearsal was uncannily smooth. "I wish something had gone wrong," said Ames, fidgeting, mindful of the stage tradition. But the others crowed over their subsequent ginger-ale, and toasted each other's futures on the boards.

"It's really an excellent little comedy," said Edgar, kindly to Ames, whom he recognized as the leading spirit among the authors and producers. Ames was enchanted, for he had felt that his host did not often appreciate him at his own valuation.

Diantha's head was in a whirl. She was a success. Also the combination of her costume on her, and Fan's on him, had so upset that young worldling's poise that he had most markedly flirted with her all the evening, and had actually and unexpectedly, and of his own volition, kissed her in a moment of satisfactory privacy in the wings. She had with proper spirit scratched his face, but that did not prevent her from feeling that the tide of adventure was running high and strong. "Like the ball before Waterloo," she thought. Before she went upstairs Fan pulled her out on the terrace and kissed her again, and dared her to scratch his face, which pleasure she forfeited in favor of a kinder salute.

When they reappeared in public they thought they appeared thoroughly at ease; but Eddie, who sat sourly with his hands jammed into his pockets, heard the hysterical note in her laugh, and knew at once what had happened. A wave of deathly faintness swept downward like a black curtain across his brain, and halted the beating of his heart.

"Coming up, Eddie?" said Mat, with his hand on the light-switch. "We're the last——"

"I'll put it out," said Eddie. And he sat motionless.

Diantha passed a night troubled with dreams and wakings, nervous crises, rapture and tears. When she slept she would wake with her mother's voice in her ears, and lie terrified by a sense of betrayal and sorrow. But whenever she remembered Fanning, she was off on a wave of joy. No one had ever kissed her before, and she had been in love with Fanning for years, in the odd and romantic manner in which little girls do fall in love. She felt herself suddenly a woman, full of deep, new thoughts; and she had no standard for judging how completely she was still a child.

But clouding her joy were two shames, lowering, formless, sombre presences,—shame for her father, and shame for herself, that she had not yet gone home . . .

She and Mat had agreed not to say anything about their departure till after the play, and she meant to slip away without saying good-by to Fanning, because she could not imagine supporting the tragedy of such a scene.

"No rehearsals!" said Ames at breakfast. "Go off and fill your lungs with fresh air." And with the word the Redgate Players scattered toward the tennis-courts and the river, while the leading lady retired to the window-seat of Cousin Edgar's study, overlooking the orchard, and buried herself in cushions. Edgar, after several wasted openings, realized that she wished to be let alone, and withdrew behind day-before-yesterday's "New York Times." Fan came scouting through the trees outside, and beckoned with one finger; she shook her head. He walked over to tap on the glass with his finger, but she turned herself among the cushions, and refused to be lured outside.

"Oh, very well," said Fan, tossing his head and walking away.

There was nothing particularly subtle about Fan's

mood: he was suddenly and obviously in love,—suddenly, obviously and perhaps cursorily; and now he was in a state of pique.

Edgar, watching her unnoticed, could not doubt that she had become a different girl overnight, and he was still young enough to be hurt at her uncommunicativeness. Not one of her expressions could be interpreted by past analogy. There were moments when, as she lay day-dreaming, her smile had the sly, mysterious ecstasy of a Luini Madonna; she flushed and paled, shut her lips firmly, and let them part again in cherubic rapture. For five minutes she looked at her own hands, speculatively, attentively, as if they were strange to her . . . Edgar could explain this, shrewdly enough, on the supposition that Fanning had last night kissed her for the first time.

But he had not the complete key to those other moments when her face froze into ugliness, when something stubborn, discreet and inhuman locked its curves to hardness. She looked narrowly out of the corners of her eyes, eyes usually as frank as those of an ingenuous young rabbit. She was feeling that she had no right to stay enjoying herself at Redgate while her mother needed her,—yet without weakening in her determination to stay, come what might.

Fan was seen no more until tea-time, when he reappeared in the green runabout with Sarah under his arm, and looked to see whether he had managed to vex his love.

She returned his look, baffled and white; and he, being nineteen and forthright, was incapable of understanding the intensity of her spiritual warfare, and concluded she meant to snub him.

"Very well!" said he in anger. "I'll kiss Sarah this evening." Intuition told him that the feat would not be impossible, despite Ames' priority.

"A big tea," said Ames, "and then no more till supper after the play. You must put in the next spell getting beautiful."

All very well to talk about a heavy tea, but when one's teeth rattle against one's cup, and one's throat refuses to swallow, it is far simpler to go without sustenance . . .

"Buck up, Di," said Mat in her ear. "Everything's right enough, don't you worry."

"Who's scared?" shouted Sarah.

A chorus of gibes answered her. Under cover of the noise, Diantha recovered her composure. "I must see Fan alone once before I go," she thought. "Perhaps I'll say good-by to him after all." And with this in mind she looked toward him.

He felt her eyes at once, and rejoicing, doubled his outcries, and directed them more particularly toward the healthy and boisterous Sarah. Not once would he meet Diantha's appealing glance, though his spirit swam exultingly in it.

While Fan was "climbing into his monocle"—to quote Ames—he was planning in detail how, just before the curtain went up on the second act, and while Diantha was standing in the opposite wings, she was to be favored with an unequivocal view of the caress he was to bestow on Sarah. To his sophomoric mind this represented the height of strategy; it would lead to a delightful atmosphere of tension during the play, especially during the now famous "final curtain," to a scene during supper, and a complete and satisfactory reconciliation on the terrace afterwards.

But Diantha, as she laced and powdered and adjusted the fetching black patch on one cheek, was whispering stupidly, "I must see Fan—I must see Fan—I'll die if I don't see Fan——"

VIII

The neighbors for miles around had driven up and settled themselves in the rows of chairs provided. Those of them who had not been at Redgate since its transfiguration were full of amazement and good-humored ridicule for Eddie's decorative flights, which had been the theme of small-talk up and down the valley all summer.

And eventually the curtain went up on the first act. If the performance was not as sparkling as the dress rehearsal, at least nobody forgot his lines, and the audience laughed genially at all the jokes. Ames danced like a hen on a hot griddle behind the scenes, exhorting his troupe.

"More pep, Di!" he plead. "Sail into it like you did last night."

She gave him a wan smile, and earnestly strove to have "more pep." But the "pep" was not within her.

Fan conducted his lightning campaign of preparation according to schedule, and staged the final *coup* exactly as he had planned, in the left-hand wings. Sarah's resultant giggle was plainly audible to the back of the house.

" 'Oh, here you are, Calista; what news?' " said Josie's voice.

("Go on, Di! There's your cue!")

Diantha obediently walked upon the stage, and stood wavering and blank. A silence fell. Josie repeated the cue:

" 'Oh, here you are, Calista; what news?' "

Di smiled propitiatingly at the audience, knowing that however long she waited, she would never remember her line, but deprived of the power to flee from the boards.

" 'I've had the worst luck in the world!' " hissed Ames, prompting her.

" 'The worst—' " said Diantha. " 'The worst—luck——' " and with this she burst into a high, long, ringing laugh.

"Curtain! Curtain!" shouted Ames, in frenzy. "For the love of Mike, ring down that curtain! She's in hysterics."

Some forty-three minutes later the curtain rose again, with Josie squeezed into Di's pink taffeta, and with the comic part of Aunt Jerusha crudely and forever suppressed. What intermediate urgencies had been undergone, what throes, what rising to events, must be left to the instructed imagination of those who have taken part in amateur theatricals. Tolerantly and even with gratification the audience had enjoyed the fracas and the long subsequent lull, which were part of what, remembering their youth, they had bargained for.

Meanwhile, in Di's darkened room, Edgar sat by the head of the bed while she went through a waning series of dry, convulsive sobs, the last of the storm. At first he had tried all the old wives' remedies, from harsh words to spirits of ammonia, but long since he had seen that the crisis must be worn through.

At last she grew completely quiet; only with difficulty he kept himself from stroking her hair, knowing that sympathy would upset her control.

"I must go home," she said, in a small, whispering voice.

"Yes, dear. As soon as you like. I expect you've missed your mother after all."

That brought one more nervous shudder, but she mastered it.

"I—*have* missed her. But she's missed me too . . . I ought to have gone yesterday."

"Oh."

"She asked me to . . . and I didn't . . ."

"You mean she specially wanted you at home?"

"She asked us to come right away. But Mat and I told her we'd go down to-morrow, you know."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"I knew you'd be disappointed. We—you see we thought it would break up the play if we went."

Edgar was silent.

"And so it did, anyway!" she cried softly, as if in a breath she had learned wisdom.

"You dear little chick," said Edgar, tempted to laugh. "It certainly did break it up; but it's going on again. Did it occur to you we might have postponed the play a few days? . . . I shouldn't wonder a bit if we'd repeat it again, later in the summer, when you're back here and your mind is at rest, so that you can take your own part all the way through."

"Oh, no, no! I can't come back."

"Why, of course you can come back, Di. Bring your mother along, for a good rest."

"No, no, no! I'm never coming back," and she began to cry, with a tired despair which touched him deeply.

"Di, is there something else the matter?"

"No," and she buried her face.

He waited a little. "Di," he said, "you had better tell me the rest. . . . Are you in love?"

"No!" she said fiercely: then in a weak voice, "I *was*."

"And you quarreled?"

"Oh, no."

"You won't be able to go to sleep till you tell me; was it Fanning?"

She nodded, overcome by his astuteness.

"Well, what's the matter?"

"I— . . . I have always loved him," said Diantha, more bravely. "And last night he—I thought everything was so wonderful . . ."

"And to-night?"

"To-night I saw him kissing Sarah!"

"The young scamp!" muttered Edgar. "The young vulgarian! The ineffable ass! I'd like to lick him!"

"Don't," said Di, sadly. "I suppose he just *is* like that. . . . He can be perfectly—perfectly *darling* when he tries . . ."

The play was over, as testified several volleys of applause, and a sound of general moving about. Josie and Sarah came pattering down the hall, to inquire for the invalid.

"S-sh!" said Edgar, at the door, "she's almost asleep. Run down, I'll join you a little later."

The maid came in, with hot-water bottles and a cup of tea. Mat knocked and was refused.

Then came a quick rat-tat on the panels. Diantha dived farther among the pillows.

"Get out!" said Cousin Edgar, in his most strident voice.

"It's me," said Fan's fresh tones. "I've got to see Diantha just a minute."

"You can't see her."

There was a short silence, after which the door-knob was quietly turned.

With three strides Edgar crossed the floor, and shut both himself and the offender into the hall.

"You must let me see her," said Fan, earnestly. "I know what's the matter with her."

"So do I, and I don't want her to have anything more to do with you. Get away from this door and don't torment her any more; she's had about enough for one evening."

"I want to explain . . ."

Edgar found pleasant the venting of his wrath in speech, and proposed to continue indefinitely.

"You shall not come around here, crushing little wild-roses in your great fists . . . On my soul, I can't understand your lack of discrimination. . . . Perhaps you'll

grow up to be a gentleman, but just now you're a most unfortunate little bounder!"

Fan flung away in a rage, his uncle's rhetoric rankling within him. As soon as he had gone, Edgar felt the fire of his anger die down, and turned back into Di's room feeling desperately sad and desperately tired, and quite incapable of sustaining the rôle of foster-parent to his wild brood.

IX

"My darling, darling mother!" Diantha cried, hurling herself forward.

Amy was not demonstrative, having learned to distrust the more facile emotions; she quietly accepted her daughter's embrace, and then took up her suitcase.

"Why didn't we come sooner?" continued Diantha in an ecstasy of abasement.

"I thought you and Mat ought to know about it, and face the situation; but it didn't make much difference whether you came down yesterday or to-day, or even to-morrow. It takes old heads to settle these affairs. I've been trying to reach Tolman by wire, and I've written pretty fully to Edgar."

"Well, what *is* the situation exactly, mother?" Mat asked. "The papers had nothing."

They stood in the little living-room, which had in the course of years, and with the assistance of Christmas checks, assumed a more sympathetic aspect, and in which the inevitable soot-darkened ceiling of Chicago was palliated by awnings and a flowering window-box. It was home to Mat and Diantha, so consecrated by years of youthful memory; but after the space, the air, and the color of Redgate it fell ingloriously upon their view. The old mahogany and the portraits had an overgrown aspect, and the carpet was forever permeated with a stuffy grime.

"Well," Amy sat down beside the darning-basket, and composed herself to work, "I don't want you children to talk about this outside, because you don't understand business, and you might so easily say the wrong thing.

I'm not at all sure I see through it. Your father is usually optimistic: but the other night he came home nervous and restless, got out his violin—and you know that's always a bad sign—swore at the cat, talked at random and rather bitterly:—at all events, I was worried.

"Finally he said he had to take a walk before he could get to sleep, and I said, 'Vesey, have you had any bad news?' 'Oh, you'll hear soon enough!' he said. 'Tomorrow can look out for itself.' I was quite roused: I said, 'Vesey Powell, you shall not leave this house till you tell me what the trouble is.' I stood with my back to the sitting-room door; the windows were open; I'm afraid the neighbors heard us.

"Poor Vesey sat down on that stool, there. I had really never seen him so upset; his courage has always been—surprising to me. 'The game's up, Amy,' he kept saying. 'It broke the wrong way.' I don't understand very well, you know, and he hated to tell me; but it seems he's been working for the Pernambuco Oil Company, selling their stock. A Mr. Belmarsh is the Chicago representative, and he was offering your father a very liberal commission; that was why we'd done so well all summer. Then Mr. Belmarsh began withholding your father's salary and commission, and he suspected there was something not right about the company, and that it would not come to anything, and that he had better break away, perhaps. But considering it was so speculative, he thought he might be able to help the company out by—by connecting them with something more stable. Now I *think* this is how it was. He got the people who were buying stock to make their checks out to him,—I often think people who have money to invest should take their responsibilities seriously,—and then he took this money and bought copper on a margin. Do you know what that means, Mat? I can't see through it, I'm just quoting."

"Yes, that makes sense," Mat growled.

"He said he had a perfectly sure tip, and that it was

going to bring in a large surplus for the company. But somehow it didn't. Some dishonest person gave him wrong information. The margin disappeared. It does seem so odd to me that real money can simply vanish. When you buy food and clothes, at least you get something back . . . So you see there was no money left to return to the Oil Company for the sale of stock."

"When did they find it out?"

"The day I telephoned you,—the day Vesey told me all this. Your father and Mr. Belmarsh had had a terrible scene, and Mr. Belmarsh had threatened to send your father to jail. But he says Mr. Belmarsh won't do that, because there *is* something so queer about the Pernambuco Oil Company that he won't want to draw attention to it at present. I—I *hate* having dealings with these people."

"Have you seen Belmarsh?"

"I went down there yesterday, and really he was not as bad as I feared."

"Poor little mother!" murmured Diantha.

"He is not a refined man, really quite the contrary, and his language is coarse; but he seemed sorry for Vesey and me, and wanted to help us. I—I think he knows I am related to Tolman Marriott, and hopes I can interest him in adjusting affairs; and of course if the Pernambuco Oil Company gets any sort of backing from Tolman, it will help them a great deal."

"Surely," cried Mat, springing up, "you haven't asked Cousin Tolman to make up that deficit!"

"No, but I have sent him word that I am in great trouble and need to see him."

"Oh, I can't bear this! I—I've got to clear out!"

"I suppose," murmured Diantha with flashing eyes, "it's a lot harder on your sensitive nature than it is on Mother."

Kicking a footstool, as was his destructive habit in

moments of stress, he subsided, merely asking, "Have you heard from him?"

"They haven't succeeded in reaching him yet. He's gone to some camp in the White Mountains. I've asked Edgar to wire."

"What is Father doing all this time?"

"Oh, he has to see a great many men on business. He's trying to borrow money. I told him he could sell all the furniture, but he said that wouldn't be a drop in the bucket. I really believe Tolman is his only hope. He is more downcast than I ever saw him. He was so—so *sincere* in believing he was doing the best thing! But now he has come to realize that he has no right to speculate with money that he is not entitled to: and I am sure this is the turning-point in his life. If he can get on his feet again he will be quite contented to take a clerical position that will bring in a small, steady income, and stop promoting new enterprises; and we shall all be much happier. I have thought perhaps you children might better leave school and go to work,—not but what I want you to have good educations, but after all the most important thing is to be able to pay our bills and hold up our heads among our neighbors."

In silence Mat and Diantha envisaged this changed prospect, which was rational enough.

"But of course the *first* thing is to get straightened out," Amy went on.

"How about Cousin Edgar? Could he help?"

"No!" Diantha almost shouted. "We take everything from him as it is. You *must not* ask him. Cousin Tolman's much better able to help out than Cousin Edgar."

Amy smiled. "You hate to take advantage of Edgar because you're a pet of his, just as I hate to ask Tolman because he's been specially nice to me. But it's true Tolman has much more command of money than Edgar; Edgar's an invalid and lives on a fixed income, and he's

put great sums into that place this summer; whereas Tolman's an active financier. Vesey told me the other day he wouldn't be surprised if Tolman doubled his capital every four or five years, and in a perfectly sound way." Here Amy sighed, as if wishing that the faculty for legitimate finance had been scattered more widely throughout human nature.

"How much is Father in the hole?"

"About eight thousand five hundred dollars."

"Oh dear!" cried Diantha, to whom this sounded vast.

"Well, I'm glad you're home. It's a great comfort to have our big children to stand by us."

"Where's Herby, by the way?"

"Poor little Herby! He's been working so hard, and nobody has thought to invite him out to the country. You know he had a job at a tire-filling station, and he's been putting five dollars a week in his savings-account. Finally your father and I sent him to one of those boys' camps for two weeks—it seemed a shame for him to miss his vacation. I'm relieved that he isn't here; he's too young to see the right and wrong of this business, and the less he knows about it the better I shall be pleased. Of course if—if—your father should be arrested, and sent—sent to prison, he would have to be told—" At the shame of this thought Amy's face turned fairly ashen and the flesh clung drooping to the bones. She had fine eyes, deep gray, tragically set in the hollow of the socket, and darkened about the lids.

Days of tedious suspense followed, during which Mat prowled catlike and irritable in and out of the stifling little house, while his mother and sister steadied their nerves by preserving two bushels of peaches and putting up fourteen jars of green cucumber pickles.

It was characteristic of Amy that, facing as she was the simultaneous loss of breadwinner and roof-tree, she

must still look forward to the contingencies of the winter lunch-table, and envisage the minor catastrophe of going without preserves, or of buying an inferior article at a high price. Her grandmothers from the dawn of history had put up preserves and stored them in their butteries; and Amy would have asked no happier lot than to preside over the ordering of a square-cornered, conservative New England house.

After a certain amount of penitential tramping up and down La Salle Street, Vesey succumbed to a nervous headache, and darkening his room retired temporarily from the world, and was galvanized into life only by the sound of the door-bell, following which his head would appear over the banisters, and his rueful, mocking whisper would be projected downward:

"Pst! Was that a telegram or a policeman?"

Edgar talked repeatedly over the telephone to Vesey and to his wife, and wired to remote spots where Tolman was supposed to be. Tolman's reply was awaited as though it had been a revelation from on high; yet when it came it could not have been less satisfactory. The blunt message which Edgar received was couched in these terms:—

"Term in jail clearly indicated, the sooner administered the more salutary. Will back family meanwhile.

"Tolman."

To translate this into polite terms drew upon Edgar's political training, but however he might verbally spare Amy's feelings, the crude fact remained, that Vesey was to be abandoned to his own misconduct.

"Have you Tolman's address now?" she asked over the telephone.

He gave it to her.

"I want to wire him once more." And she sat down to compose a prayer for grace, at so much a word.

"If he passes this crisis he will deal honestly in future. If abandoned will go down hill permanently. Greatest favor I can ever ask is to save my home for me now.

"Amy."

She had no comfort to give Vesey after hearing the message from Tolman, but in the moment when she stood outside his door, she felt some unsuspected store of courage flooding through her body. He should not be left to admit failure . . . dishonor . . .

With her hand on the knob, she remained praying to her God, who stood suddenly near to her, stronger than all calamity.

Then she went in to her husband. The room was stifling, and he had flung himself across the bed. Upon her entrance he looked up, thinking she had good news: but she shook her head as she sat down beside him. He reached for her hands and clung to them, and before long he began a confession of so much of his dealings as could filter through his tortuous brain. His only relief was in flinging himself upon her mercy.

She was amazed at her own repose, while he abased himself thus before her; and as she looked down at his prostrate limbs and the well-known head, its face averted, there came to her such a feeling as she had never experienced with regard to him,—a stirring of pity and tenderness which he had not commanded even during her early infatuation for him. It was mother-love, minor-keyed, yearning; and with it she took him for the first time into the circle of her children, whom it was her glory to upbuild, to defend and to inspire. And she even found time to blame herself for the years during which she had deprived him of this love, through which he might have grown into a strong man.

No words were given to the real meaning of this colloquy, in which she, timorous, guaranteed him strength, and he, unstable, promised her a fuller loyalty; but she emerged with the grand step of a sibyl.

Upon Amy's entrance, Diantha stood prepared to condole and to rebel against circumstances: but her mother's serene motion and the exaltation of her face put the girl to silence. Amy pushed back Diantha's hair and left her fingers lying for an instant on her forehead.

"If we all stand together," she said slowly, "and help each other, we are bound to come out right."

To Diantha her mother was magnificent; she could have kissed her feet.

Amy sent a third telegram to her cousin, but the next day it was returned undelivered; Tolman Marriott had gone from Pine Knot, leaving no address.

That evening Amy and Diantha sat together on the front steps, watching the sunset die out at the end of the street. Diantha had resolved to cry no more and had kept her vow: but as they sat quiet, she was moved to the very depths,—by the glow in the West, smoke-thwarted into a poem of tone; by her mother's steady eyes; by the tangled memories of Redgate, and of some beautiful thing irrevocably lost and broken there: she was moved to an intensity of suffering such as the young can know, while life is still more real than thinking.

Through the chord of the city's voices struck a single phrase from a piano, a few notes immediately interrupted, floating enigmatical and poignant upon the air.

At that moment there opened before Diantha some vista of the mysterious world, of the beauty, the ineffable beauty beyond suffering, which wrings the heart with its final anguish and with joy.

Such things are difficult to tell, but they are reality. Diantha never forgot that hour, and it was perhaps then that she began to live; at all events it was then, and not at the moment of Fanning's kiss, that she ceased to be a child, and took on a woman's complexity of soul.

X

"I MUST see Belmarsh," said Vesey, opening an egg. He bore a general appearance of having been drawn through a knot-hole. Mat's eye, turned upon his parent, expressed positive distaste.

"Would you like me to go down with you?" asked Amy.

"No—well—I don't know—what do you think?"

"It might help——"

"I'd stay out of it, Mother, if I were you!" (This from Mat.)

Following some discussion, Vesey went off alone to "feel out the lay of the land," as he put it. His opinion still held that Belmarsh did not wish the searchlight of publicity to play too rudely upon the structure of the Pernambuco Oil Company; but if even an utterly reputable concern might feel the loss of $8,500, how much would it aggravate the totterings of an unstable one! . . . "Though if a cent of that money ever gets to South America, I'll eat my shirt," Vesey had muttered.

After his father's departure, Mat took his sister by the elbow.

"Look here, what alternative have they—have we? All we do is to keep on expecting the impossible,—gazing up to heaven and calling for a bolt from the blue to carry off Belmarsh. But that won't happen, you know; and in a day or two Father will ride away in the Black Maria, and then what?"

"Why, Mat, I don't know. We can all go to work, and we can live far more simply. Plenty of people do it. Herby's been earning money this summer while we've been frivoling."

"Well, what would you go to work at? You're not educated enough to be anything very lucrative."

"If I got seven or eight dollars a week, at least that would be better than nothing."

"As a salesperson, I suppose . . . Well! Go ahead. But I don't intend to tie myself down to that sort of a job,—with no future; I mean to make myself count."

"Yes, Mat," said his sister. "How do you mean to go about it?"

"I think I'll start a magazine."

"Oh!" Even Diantha had heard that this was not always a remunerative career, especially to a youth of Mat's temperament. And the determination to start something new, instead of working into an established business, sounded fatally like Vesey.

"I see," said Mat pugnaciously, "you don't think it can be done: but wait. I have any quantity of ideas; Ames and I have been talking it over for a year, and we meant to do it as soon as we graduated, but as things have turned out I shall drop college and begin work this fall."

"It will take money, won't it?"

"That can be arranged, between Ames and me."

"Ames and you!" cried Diantha. "Then Ames will have to pay all the bills, because goodness knows the Powell family can't."

"My dear child, we shouldn't be so ridiculous as to carry it ourselves. We'll interest our rich and great friends and get them to take stock. At first we'll have the magazine printed instead of setting up our own press, so you see there won't be any great capital outlay. The principal costs will be printing, advertising, liberal checks to contributors, and a trifle of overhead."

"What rich and great friends are you talking about? Cousin Tolman, or Cousin Edgar?"

"Neither, especially. We're going to put this up to a lot of business men, as a business proposition. What we shall really do is capitalize our own brains."

From the first word there had been antagonism between Mat and Diantha over the proposed magazine, and her eye unerringly detected the least substantial links in the plan. Mat, to whom it was by this time very nearly sacred, felt hurt, and forebore to treat her to the reading which he had planned of his own poems, composed during the past year under the stimulus of University life.

However, no breach was opened during the present engagement, for the strange reason that Tolman Marriott just then rang the doorbell.

"There's your bolt from the blue!" Diantha flung his jeer back at him, after a scrutiny through a crack in the front curtains.

Till Amy came down, Tolman sat jingling the silver in his trousers pockets, and frowning involuntarily. With great discretion the children blotted themselves from view during the interview:—a feat accomplished, in a house where the only living-room measured twelve by fourteen, by sitting on the edge of Mat's bed. Truce was informally called in regard to the magazine, and they exchanged pious wishes and hopes as to the extent of his probable benevolence.

In the midst of the morning's events, Vesey dragged himself back from downtown,—his headache worse and his nerves more sharp-strung after an unedifying interview with his superior. He stopped on the threshold as if stunned.

Tolman and Amy found him *à propos*, for their talk had reached the necessity of a corroborative exhibit.

The telegram which Tolman had sent Edgar had preyed on his conscience, and interrupted a day of perfect fishing. When on his return in the evening he was given Amy's appeal, compunction had him completely in its grasp. He thought of his cousin, once adorably pretty and full of spirit, now broken by her luckless partnership: of her need of real moral backing: of the small difference the money would make to him: of the possibility

of Vesey's regeneration,—though this was pure speculation. A motor carried him that night to the train, miles through the mountains; he changed cars once at three in the morning and once at six-thirty, as people must who would travel in New England; and all the way he was revolving practicable plans for Vesey's rehabilitation, secured by the strongest possible checks on his conduct.

He had talked to Amy in a friendly spirit of coöperation which had shaken her composure by its unexpectedness. "Excuse me if I cry one little weep," she said. "If you were an angel with wings you couldn't change things in this house more wonderfully."

He had been surprised, in his turn, by her real and complete faith in Vesey's possibilities, "and if she's kept it after living with him twenty years, who am I to doubt them?" he thought,—continuing, however, in his skepticism.

Vesey was wanted, therefore, to display his altered mind and spirit; and no one could have done so more thoroughly. Turning his eyes continually to his wife's as if for permission to speak, he pointed out to himself and his hearers, not only the basic immorality of his mode of life, but its folly, judged by the emoluments and dangers; and without imposing any claim on Tolman, he indicated that if some miracle should free him from his prospective fetters and give him a fresh start, he would know how to profit by his mistakes.

"That's as it may be," thought Tolman again. "But I'd rather write a check for the whole amount than let him go to jail, since Amy seems to like him."

However, for the safeguarding of the future, a more elaborate expedient was resorted to, emulating the Constitution of the United States in its checks and balances. It involved Tolman's lending Vesey the $8,500, giving him a position, and collecting a considerable amount out of the salary each month; meanwhile lending Amy, from month to month, such additional funds as might be re-

quired for the running of their frugal household,—this second debt to be paid in the undetermined future. Vesey's reform might or might not be solid, but there was no use in tempting him,—so Amy and Tolman agreed in thinking,—with any superfluity of borrowed coin at any one time.

XI

While so much was happening on Hickory Place, Redgate languished without the young Powells; and in fact before a week was up, the house-party had scattered. Christine and Luke, with their infant, came for a few days, and Edgar found her willing to sit all day, discussing education with him, and checking every generality by reference to the future powers of her son.

Edgar thought the infant even more fascinating, perhaps, than his adolescent brood—"because he's all possibilities, the little pudge, and the others have begun to develop a few limitations, and so place themselves in grooves."

While resisting the efforts of his grand-nephew to lure an adult finger, with clutching, curling baby hands, into a baby mouth, he told Christine much of his hope for the family and its continuity of tradition.

" 'Honest, generous, brave and loyal,' I used to say. And they must go outside of themselves,—*give* something. How to make them do it, that's the question. After all, they only give out what good is in them, and the good you can't train in,—you can only free it by helping them to be natural."

"Children are very imitative," said Christine. "I can remember being formed largely by my enthusiasm for fine personalities."

("My son shall never have cause to think me anything but fine," she thought, and drew herself up.)

"If God loves us as much as you love that kid, why doesn't He make His children turn out better?"

"Oh, I don't know," she cried, frightened by the tone

of the question. "Most people turn out pretty well if you really know their minds. Do you remember John Carpenter's song about the colored toys? That explains a lot to me, about the love of God." As she uttered these damaging and unconventional words, she looked askance at her uncle, knowing that to speak seriously about the love of God was to admit herself Victorian; and her Victorianism was a humiliating secret locked in her heart.

Fanning, the godlike Fanning, put in three or four days of wholesome reflection, and an evening of discussion with his uncle, before disappearing into the north woods.

Edgar's wrath had soon receded, at the sight of his nephew's hangdog face. Had it not been for Diantha, he might have been glad that the boy had been startled into thinking seriously.

"If he cares about Diantha," thought the *deus ex machina,* as he ran his paper-knife through the pages of a volume of Morley, "I'll have her out again, and they'll patch it up in no time."

Previous to this, he had not considered match-making as a career; but it opened entrancing vistas. A Fanning deepened and subdued, though still wrapped in his ermine mantle, was to lead to the altar an apotheosized Diantha, her own flower-like self, but with every petal at full spread in the dazzle of comfort and happiness.

"By Jove, they'd pull each other up by their bootstraps to the end of the chapter!" he exclaimed aloud; and flinging his biography aside, he launched into a prophetic day-dream.

The talk with Fanning, however, though maneuvered toward this end, proved disillusioning. Fan was ashamed, —yes, he was fond of Diantha—yes, indeed; but his love had been an affair of glamor, and had been scared out of him beyond recall.

"I expect I'd better write and apologize to her," he said. "Gee, I could roast myself over a slow fire, hurting her feelings like that . . . A man just doesn't think, Uncle Edgar. Such a nice little thing . . . I ought to have been looking out for her . . . We won't meet for a while, till it blows over. You talk to her, won't you, and tell her how sorry I am,—she takes things from you better than from anybody else. Her mother and father are ghastly, aren't they? She must hate it at home . . . I couldn't bear to think we weren't going to be friends again. She's only a kid after all, you know. I don't believe she's going to hold it against me forever . . . Oh, Lord!"

Considering the lie of the land, Edgar was well pleased to have him removed from the spot by ten degrees of latitude, for it gave him a chance to invite Diantha back and administer balm. She came, however, only for a week-end with her mother, during the course of which she lived withdrawn and undiscoverable in a world of her own.

Another Powell was more communicative. Mat favored his cousin with an overnight visit, and laid before him a pencil-draft for the prospectus of "The Red Rag" (*redivivus*).

"I want to earn money, and help out . . ." At this Edgar nodded. "Ames and I . . ." and he enlarged for fifteen minutes on the projected magazine,—"really constructive, really radical; none of this flash-in-the-pan stuff, you know, but sound reasoning. We'd like awfully well to have you on the editorial staff, for one thing . . . There's a tremendous field for just this sort of publication between the ravings of the dispossessed and the smugness of the respectable. We'd guarantee to make it so readable that you'd argue yourself unknown if you admitted not having seen the last issue. You know Ames—his facility, his ironic way of getting under people's skins.

And he's not scared of the devil himself . . . I'm more in the forceful and fervid line myself . . . good balance of personalities.

"We'll get hold of half-a-dozen bright chaps without axes to grind, and we'll pay them real money——"

"Ah!" Edgar pierced the air before him with a finger. "There's the rub,—real money. I grant it may be possible to get subscribers; I grant the initial outlay can be covered with the aid of myself and a few friends,—since that's plainly what you're up here to talk about;—I grant all that, and I freely concede that you and Ames are as smart as most magazine writers:—but who's going to advertise in 'The Red Rag'? Radicals, you know, are not the property-owning class, nor is it they who pay five thousand for a back page to call people's attention to Rosemarine Talcum Cream."

"Well, who do *you* think would?" Mat asked, cleverly turning the question, whose solution had not figured prominently in his thought.

"There's a limited field," said Edgar thoughtfully. "Mostly publishers, I should think. Look over the files of 'The Quarry' and 'The Intransigeant,' and see what they carry. You'll need a good business manager, and I imagine a New York advertising representative. . . . All that will cost money. Do you expect to pay dividends?"

"We hope to after it gets going. Here's our estimate of expense . . ."

They went over his figures,—Edgar suggesting such items as his experience warranted, and at the end adding 33 1/3% to the total for "unforeseen leakages."

"Ames and I," said Mat, "are allowing ourselves twelve dollars a week apiece,—that ought to support us after a fashion; the profits over that are to go into dividends to stockholders."

"You have a perfect right to capitalize your brains, and pay yourselves dividends if you ever get to that point: but in fairness I must say that most magazines of an

intellectual type, especially with radical tendencies, are pure labors of love. You'll never build a house out of your dividends."

Mat was forced to admit as much.

"None the less, it'll be an interesting game, and most educational, far more so than staying at the University. I don't regret that for a minute."

"I'll be saving you some money by leaving there."

Edgar chuckled. "I imagine it would come cheaper in the long run for me to keep you in college than to begin financing your magazine. All the same, I take to the notion. Understand, I'm not made of money. If I put a few thousand dollars into your 'Red Rag,' I want the rights of property respected sufficiently to give me a chance of some dividends, and an eventual clearing of the debt."

"You're absolutely right, Cousin Edgar. I wouldn't ask you to subscribe on any other basis. Who else do you suppose we could approach? Cousin Tolman?"

Edgar's eyes rolled impishly under the angle of his brows. "Don't go near Tolman," he said. "I warn you as a friend. Tolman is *not* a radical. You'll hear from him soon enough, but there won't be any stock subscription to it. Wait: I'll give you a list of half-a-dozen men I used to know, who might support your idea. You can use my name within limits; I trust you with it, and you can return it to me undamaged. There!" he had scribbled on a paper. "You can look these addresses up in the telephone book; I've lost touch with most of them, but they're good fellows, and liberal toward the vagaries of youth. Will you have tea?"

Edgar was at heart delighted with the "Red Rag" and promised himself infinite pleasure out of the new toy. Ames and Edgar worshiped him when they saw how his pen could wrest money out of gruff plutocrats who had treated them with scarcely veiled sarcasm. He went so

far as to ask three of what he called the "tough nuts" up for a week-end, wives and all, so as to afford the boys a chance of meeting them. By cajolery, by wit, by oratory, by argument, he piled up a subsidy—for none of the donors were under illusions as to the dividends they were to receive—sufficient to carry the magazine for two years, even running at a dead loss.

"Any money you happen to get in, either subscriptions or advertising, is just 'velvet,' and prolongs your lives to that extent," he pointed out to them. "In two years you'll have sunk or swum."

Ames and Mat labored long over their editorial policy, which skirted syndicalism at a distance, and held "direct action" in horror, while on the other hand Woman's Suffrage was axiomatic, and the Initiative, Referendum and Recall too banal to be considered.

They hired an office, and engaged a square-headed young man as "executive,"—reserving to themselves the posts of editor and office-boy. Their own propaganda,—paid and unpaid,—they pushed untiringly, with Edgar's counsel, and an occasional word in a publicist's ear.

After the closing of Redgate Farms, Eddie had undertaken to arrange himself a studio at home, and he now scandalized Rhoda by the introduction into the house of foreign-looking persons who, although they appeared fully clothed, she had reason to know were "professional nude models," and who dressed and undressed behind a screen. Had the thing been conceivable, she would have given notice; at it was, she registered a firm protest with Mr. Edgar against being forced to open the door for them, and only his personal petition that she would bear with Eddie "till he lived through this phase," availed to pacify her.

"Such goings-on!" she muttered, vociferously washing dishes. "What the old madam would have said, Lord only knows!"

Eddie's studio became a favorite meeting-place for the

board of the "Red Rag," and he was carried away on the tide of enthusiasm. Not only did he make a wood-cut block for the cover design, and two bold and barbarous crayon caricatures for the first issue,—he swallowed the prospectus, hook, line and sinker, from Government ownership to the Higher Pacifism. Before long the incredible had happened, in that he had taken his pen in hand and written an imaginary interview between Lloyd George then a dreadful demagogue, and Woodrow Wilson, a theoretical politician from Princeton, who was running on the Democratic ticket for Governor.

Diantha stayed at home, seething with indignation. She did not—*not*—*not*—believe in the magazine; she thought the boys were imposing shamefully on Cousin Edgar, whose customary good judgment seemed to have failed him. The enormity of Mat's awarding himself twelve dollars a week out of "Cousin Edgar's money," and then buying out of it not only food and shoes, but neckties and fountain-pens, outraged her. She was miserable and bored, but she could not be a party to iniquity; and besides the financial instability, had not Mamma said that the "whole idea" of the "Red Rag" was destructive and wicked?

Imagine, then, her state of mind when she heard that "the Board" had elected Mat its New York representative, and was paying his expenses down there.

"Graft, that's all it is!" she said to Mat. He pitied and disliked her for her attitude. She was utterly wretched.

It remains only to be said that Tolman proved himself far from a radical, but near to a roaring lion. First he mangled Edgar verbally for supporting the boys in their subversive attitude.

". . . One doesn't mind young chaps having fizzly ideas," he said, "but generally their lack of funds keeps

them out of serious mischief. It *is* iniquitous, Edgar, to give them their heads and a lot of cold cash, and let them scratch matches all around the gasoline tank."

Edgar murmured something about the value of getting the fizzle out of their system. In truth, he blushed when he looked Tolman in the eye.

"You don't care," said Tolman, "if your class in society rots or explodes. Just because you're a cripple and can't take part, you're helping blow the rest of us up. Every good thing about you,—your money, your brains, your education, your family,—comes out of the system of private property. And you're willing to steal those chances from your children and mine."

"Your children and mine are sturdy enough to stand on their own legs instead of the rungs of a stepladder," said Edgar, who was finding the dialogue fatiguing because there was no way of reaching Tolman with an answer.

After the failure of this attack, Tolman sent for Mat at his office, and made him an astonishing proposal.

"It's not because I like you," he explained. "You've succeeded in annoying me and worrying me beyond all bounds; it's because I'm very fond of your mother, and I'm trying to help her pull her family together, and now when your father's just getting on his feet, you have to go off on a tangent like this 'Red Rag' which will make trouble for everybody, and which you will live to regret, and which your relatives can't *afford* to have flaunted in the face of the world."

The proposal was, in brief, that if the Board would disband and refund the subsidy to its subscribers, Tolman Marriott would make good the sums already expended; and he would further lend Mat a capital equal to one-half the subsidy, to be invested in any reputable business which might have Tolman's approval and supervision.

Mat took the situation under advisement. He could not

refuse his cousin the credit of being willing to pay for his convictions.

But the "Red Rag" had become too dear to its founders to be lightly abandoned; and there was even an additional charm in the price on its head. Capitalism had tried to choke the voice of free-speech; capitalism must be rebuffed,—politely, as was due, but unmistakably. *Sic semper tyrannis!*

The story should be written up in the first issue—without names . . . Only Edgar's personal plea suppressed the resultant editorial; and as Mat pigeon-holed it he felt uneasily that the press was being muffled after all.

"It's perfect rot, this belonging to a respectable family," said he to Ames. "If we can never hurt anybody's feelings, what are we going to put in the 'Rag'?"

"We'll find somebody's feelings to hurt, so don't worry," replied the Editor-in-Chief. "But it's not rot at all, belonging to a respectable family. If you tried belonging to the other kind for a while, you'd be glad enough to change back."

"Seems to me I have all the disadvantages of both kinds," growled Mat, thinking as affectionately as usual of his father.

PART III

I

"You will positively be over, won't you, Edgar?" Daisy sat at the telephone, and tapped with her pencil upon a list which her secretary had made out for immediate attention. "A few of us old fogies are going to have a table in the music-room, and Tolman says he needs you to support him. You know you're well enough. Josie won't feel her party's complete unless you come, Edgar."

"Why, thank you, Daisy. You know I never go anywhere; but I realize what a special occasion this is, and of course Josie and I are pals. Well, I think I can make it: what time?"

"Eight o'clock," and on the heels of his acceptance Daisy turned to the waiting Miss Dulany.

"Would you like to speak to the caterer before he goes, Mrs. Marriott?"

"If you'll ask him to step in a minute . . ."

One doubts whether Edgar really rated at its proper worth, after all, the seriousness of Josie's coming-out party. But in the house on the drive, little else had been discussed since October, at least in those hours before luncheon when mail is opened, nails are manicured and the mechanism of polite life oiled and tuned. It is true that Christine and Adeline had made their début successfully enough at a ball at Bournique's, and the Marriotts had invited "everybody on the North, South and West Sides who owned a boiled shirt," as Joshua had confided to Captain Toody . . . one of those balls at which the company balanced a plate of chicken-salad on its knee

for supper, while a colored waiter circulated with a tray, offering coffee or chocolate; one of those balls at which there were dishes of dance-cards in the dressing-rooms. But in the intervening years Chicago had taken a number of the steps that divide the small town from the metropolis, and the Marriott family had perhaps withdrawn itself by a few upward degrees from the memory of Ricky Pellew's spectacular collapse and Lucinda's eccentricity.

So at Josie's party, more important than the names to be included were those to be omitted; and it had seemed fitting to Daisy to limit the invitations by giving a dinner-dance at her own house instead of a ball at the Blackstone. "It's to be very small and informal," the Marriotts went about saying; but it is obvious when one has two smart young married daughters they must be asked, and a few of their friends must be asked, and—well, Triggs had been ordered to serve dinner for two hundred and thirty-six; and even at that, some omissions had occurred which waked Daisy up in the middle of the night with that sensation of horror which means that another hair has blanched untimely.

During the summer of 1911 Hickory Place had been almost barricaded by the building operations at the rear of the Marriott mansion. Tolman had bought two of the small houses to the west of his lot, and had constructed a picture-gallery to enshrine his Barbizon masterpieces. It had a musicians' balcony and a majestic carved stone mantel, and the possession of it was what had suggested to Daisy the necessity of a house dinner-dance. A new art-gallery creates obligations. And while they were about it, Daisy had resolved to "do it up brown," and give a dinner-dance which should stand for years as a gauge for succeeding functions. During the afternoon—Thanksgiving afternoon—there was to be a tea, to which were bidden the mature, the wealthy, the old family friends; after an hour's respite, during which the caterer's men were to spirit into the front rooms a forest

of tables, the young and the chic were to arrive. At some period during the evening Luciani was to sing—so said rumor; after midnight two Russians from New York were to dance; there were to be cotillion favors which came in jewelers' boxes; and the carriage-call was for three o'clock, though sausage and pancakes had been provided for those bolder spirits who might stay till four.

"Are you *sure* you have enough stags, mother?" asked Adeline.

"Speak to Miss Dulany, my dear: I can't keep numbers in my head. Josie's suited, so I'm not agitated."

Josie came in at this moment, pursued by a dressmaker.

"Look, Mother dear," she said. "Here's my dress, just come home."

"I like it," said her mother. "Turn around."

"You don't think it makes me look a little fat through here?"

"Nonsense, you're thinner than is healthy."

"Josie's right, Mother," put in Adeline. "You might let this out."

"Why, Ad! It needs taking in, not letting out."

"Don't interrupt me. Would you mind ripping out those little gathers, Miss Ethel? . . . There! Now just let it hang loose. That's much newer—the dress I got in New York had just that line. You can press it that way, Miss Ethel."

Daisy and Josie were forced to admit that Adeline's instinct in matters of dress surpassed their own. She was accustomed to say that if Ernest lost his money she'd enjoy running a dressmaking shop.

"Have you taken Miss Powell's frock over yet?" Daisy asked.

"Not yet, madam. I'm going there next."

"What! Is Diantha coming? Why, she's not out of school yet."

"I know, but Tolman simply said that if we didn't ask

her he wouldn't come either . . . It does no harm, you know."

"I suppose not. It is sort of a bore, though, isn't it?"

"I'm awfully fond of Di," said Josie stoutly.

"Yes, but she doesn't know your friends, and she'll have a horrid time at the dance. I think she's too young. Why don't you tell her mother she ought to go home early?"

"I'll keep an eye on her," said Daisy comfortably. "Nobody's going to be stuck at this dance if Josie and I can prevent it."

"Well, I think you were a darling to give her a dress."

"It was a case of *had to,* my dear. Otherwise she'd have made over the parlor curtains, or wrapped herself in a bureau-cover."

A few doors down Hickory Place, havoc was let loose by the arrival of the dressmaker's box. Daisy had characteristically sent the dress without warning, and since the receipt of the invitation, Amy and Diantha had passed their evenings in the home manufacture of net over pink china silk. Diantha, surveying their handiwork, was forced to the admission that though the Powell family could sew with strong, unyielding stitches, they lacked something of the higher creative sense. Amy had thought the dress very sweet and pretty and appropriate, and worshiped her young daughter so attired.

But the gown which disclosed itself under a million folds of tissue-paper in Celeste's box, was, as even Amy could see, in a class apart. Part of it shimmered and part of it drifted; part of it was a fairy blue, caught with shell-like roses; here and there was lace, and here and there were crystal sparkles. It was the very first "party-dress" Diantha had been privileged to put on which had not previously graced Josie's sturdy form.

"Oh, it's too beautiful, too beautiful!" cried Diantha. "You don't suppose there's any mistake, do you? It couldn't possibly be for Josie herself?"

"Not at all," said the correct Miss Ethel. "Mrs. Marriott ordered it for a Christmas present for Miss Powell, and she asked me to come in and see if it needed any little alterations. There are some slippers ordered from O'Rourke's, of the same material."

I may as well say that from this day onward, Diantha's proud democratic simplicity was weakened. However scandalous she might think Mat's inroads upon Cousin Edgar's purse, it was not in her heart to refuse gifts like this one; and for two or three months she quite venerated Cousin Daisy Marriott.

Of the famous party itself, I have comparatively little to tell: it fulfilled expectations. Josie was fairly launched on a career of triumph, and only the people who had not been invited to receive them complained of the ostentatiousness of the favors.

Edgar found himself a corner from which to pass judgment on the young world which he was seeing assembled for perhaps the first time in fifteen years, and besought his friend Mrs. Gurney to sit by his side and tell him "who the children were."

"You know, that music makes me feel like a two-year-old," said he. "I think I'll hire me a band to play after dinner every evening, and see if it won't cure all my afflictions."

"You need to get out more, Edgar."

"I believe you're right."

"You're younger and handsomer now than two-thirds of those gawkish long-faced boys," and she gave him a flattering look.

"There's nobody like you for making a fellow conceited, Prissie," he said, laughing comfortably. "There goes young Josie. Look at her ineffable society smile—my Lord!"

"I suppose she can't help having her head turned a bit, but she'll get over it. Débutantes always think the

world revolves around them, because a few people act as if it did. Wait till she's been out two years."

"Ah! here come the real beauties!"

"You prejudiced old uncle! They're no beautifuller than anybody else."

"You're blind if you don't see it."

"How did Fan get away from college?"

"His mother's clean demented about this party, and has been for weeks. She ordered him home."

Fan and Diantha were dancing together at the moment, and beyond question each thought the other beautiful. Her large eyes were shining up into his, and they were dancing in a dream.

"Why was I goose enough to send her that dress?" thought Daisy. "Fan . . . Fan! I want to speak to you . . . Don't let Diantha get stuck . . . She doesn't know people . . . Introduce your friends to her."

"Don't you worry," laughed Fan. "Everybody wants to meet her; but I know a good thing when I see one. I don't intend to let her meet every Tom, Dick and Harry that's here."

"Don't be a pig, Fan. This is her first party."

"I say, Di," said Fan confidentially to his pretty partner, "would you like to meet all those fellows?"

"Why, yes, Fan."

"Oh! Then you don't like dancing with me."

"Fanning Marriott, you know I'd rather dance with you than anybody; but you can't spend the whole evening with me."

"I suppose not." Whereupon he introduced to her, in a lowering and disagreeable manner, two or three young men around the punch-bowl.

"It's just as I expected," he growled; "she's gone for good." For now, at each pause in the dancing, he saw her partners presenting more men to her, all of whom showed a lively desire for her company.

Fan planted himself in the forefront of the stag-line,

and stood scowling, his hands behind his back, until his mother routed him out and made him do his duty. "*She* doesn't think about me any more than if I was a waiter," he said to himself. "I wonder if her ladyship so much as remembers she let me kiss her once." And this question so vexed him that during the cotillion he thought well to draw it to her attention.

"Come on and dance, Di," he said, rushing up and tendering her a toy balloon. She floated into his arms, and they danced in a pool of colored light, under the bobbing fantastic spheres.

"Di, has anybody ever kissed you since?"

"Since what, Fan?—oh!—Why, you perfect idiot!"

"Well, *has* anybody?"

"If you can't guess, you're so stupid there's no use telling you."

"You young vixen!" he emphasized his vexation by slightly shaking her.

The devil died out in her laughing face for a second, as she said with dry seriousness, "No, Fan, I've never learned to think well of casual kissing."

"Then you haven't really forgiven me yet?"

"Oh, yes," evasively. "That was years ago. I've really forgotten it."

"I'm just as sorry as I ever was, Di. It has sort of spoiled things between us."

"Perhaps it has," she said soberly. Then the festive spirit flamed up again, and her mischievous smile played upon him. "How many girls have *you* kissed in the last two years, Fan?"

"Not so many as you think."

"Don't let one unfortunate experience stop you."

"Di, I hate you when you try to be devilish; it isn't your line."

She retaliated by a very shameless grimace over his shoulder toward the stag-line, which produced an immediate result; and Fanning danced with her no more.

II

"I ALMOST wish Cousin Daisy hadn't asked me," said Di, after two weeks during which she had kicked Celeste's dress-box every time she made her bed. "If I hadn't known what good times other girls have, I could have stood it better."

Amy ceased to escort the carpet-sweeper across the tract in front of the bureau, and directed an anxious look at her daughter. "You know those things don't count, Diantha."

"In theory I know they don't, Mamma, but in practice I'm just starving for them. I want to wear that lovely dress again, but I don't expect ever to have the chance."

"Why, dearie, you have lots of good times coming; you're too young, that's all. If it had been anybody's party but your own cousin's, I shouldn't have let you go. Wait till next year."

"The girls that are away at school have parties in the holidays, but I'm not asked to any of them."

"You don't know them."

"No. I don't." She kicked the box again. Cousin Edgar had offered Diantha two years at an Eastern school, but her vexation at Mat's lack of pride, as she considered it, had prevented her accepting this obligation. And it must be confessed that she had not further endeared herself to her schoolmates in Chicago. The prevailing atmosphere had continued, and was likely to do so until after Diantha's graduation, owing to the presence of three or four cheerful vulgarians as class officers; and though they had plenty of parties, they no longer invited Diantha. She did, alas! "give herself airs" which the

healthy Americanism of her fellows was swift to punish in a thousand ways; and a breach had widened beyond mending. Unfortunately too, her relatives who interested themselves in her development took no steps to correct her manner of thinking, partly because she gave herself no airs in their presence, and partly because, according to their traditions, she was making a distinct sacrifice of caste in remaining at the public high school, and could not be expected to find congenial company there.

"I hate this dangling between earth and heaven," she continued bitterly:—"clutching at the very last taggling tatter of respectability. I'd much rather not try to behave like a cousin of the Tolman Marriotts."

"My dear child," said her mother with some asperity, "I don't care for a moment whether you behave like a cousin of the Tolman Marriotts, and it isn't the slightest pleasure to me to have you go to their parties, if you're going to be disagreeable for a month afterward. The only ambition I have for you socially is that you should conduct yourself like a lady, which is what you are and what your forebears have been as long as anybody can remember."

Rarely did Amy express herself with such force; and Diantha felt jarred and hurt, but was at least silenced. Amy breathed deeply as she wielded the oil-mop, and admitted to herself that her nerves were wearing near the skin.

Herbert, now past sixteen, and for the most part a comfortable lad though stolid to a fault, had begun grasping after cigarettes and pool-rooms, and was to be seen dangling about street-corners in the company of youths whom he showed no inclination to introduce to his mother.

As for Mat and his "Red Rag," it had long been a cross to her,—violating as it did her loyalty to true religion and the Republican party; but from time to time acute crises aggravated her chronic suffering, and such a crisis was now at hand. From this it will be correctly

surmised that the "Rag" was continuing its issues; and as its third winter had now begun, obviously it had stored up some little of that "velvet" upon which Edgar had calculated with slight assurance. Not only had it succeeded in surviving; its subscription list was in a healthy state, it had successfully raised its advertising rates. Its contributors were the best-known names in its own field, and at the close of the past fiscal year the stockholders had been struck dumb with surprise in receiving checks for dividends at the rate of 1¾%, and the promise of more to come.

Three causes might be held responsible for this state of affairs, which was of an extreme rarity among periodicals, and which almost justified the claim of the prospectus that the "Red Rag" had established itself as a going concern. First, the square-headed young man who has been mentioned as the business manager proved a paragon for successful management. Some attendant spirit whispered to him where expenses might be cut down after they had been cut and cut to the bone; where advertising could be placed so that it brought tangible results; how letters were to be written which practically forced subscriptions out of their recipients, and how lists were to be compiled of the very types of men to whom the letters would appeal; on what day of the week and at what hour of the day advertising managers saw most clearly the advantages of space in a radical intellectual journal; which millionaires might be most successfully approached for subsidizing certain issues featuring their pet hobbies; how to control the temperaments of his office-force; in a word, how to run a magazine. He believed implicitly in the "Rag," which he secretly regarded as the work of his hands exclusively, considering that one writer would have done about as well as another, and one policy, so long as the business management was competent.

It had early been laid down that no person was to draw to a greater extent than $1,200 a year on the re-

sources of the magazine; the rule was Garrity's own, because he saw that otherwise the balance-sheet would not be presentable; and he had remained absolutely loyal, in the face of bait and allurement much more golden from other publications which saw his worth. He had his reward, indeed, in every sweet-smelling number that piled up beside the presses; and to the trade Garrity was, in large measure, the "Red Rag."

A second reason lay in the gifts of Ames Bicknell as editor, for though he and Mat shared the glory of this post, it was his subtle mind that sought out the contributors, and enticed them into writing their best for a small remuneration (for the "liberal checks" had dwindled in fact to the smallest possible amounts). It cannot be said that Ames was a sound thinker or a consistent one; he gloried in his enthusiasms, most of which never matured, while the roster of them changed quarterly; but he had a *flair* for the currents of thought,—a sixth sense comparable to Garrity's business faculty; he avoided asking for articles which would be *vieux jeu* by the time they were in print, and ferreted out the opinions that were to become current the week after next.

Furthermore,—and in popularizing the "Rag" this was most important,—Ames had developed under pressure the gift of being extremely funny. When anything out-of-the-way took place at Washington, the enlightened few rushed to see what Bicknell had found to say on the subject. He had a dry, sly vein of humor which crept upon its victim from the north-northwest, and shredded him to bits. It might be exasperating, but it was unforgettable; and often in this, the best part of his own work, he hit by instinct upon the most ridiculous and vulnerable spot in the enemy's armor. He was mentioned at the dinner-tables where history is made; he was clipped and plagiarized from Maine to California. He was quoted into the "Congressional Record." He was invited to speak at banquets, when he dangled his eyeglass infuriatingly in

the faces of labor-leaders and capitalists alike, both of whom detested his personality, and begrudged him the laughter they could not withhold.

The third element of strength which had supported the "Red Rag" was the one for which the Marriott blood was responsible, whether Mat or Eddie or both. From them came the moral seriousness of tone which satisfied the earnest, and gave the magazine the hold it undoubtedly had upon the proletariat. The laboring-man was apt to skim over Bicknell's funny editorials as negligible,—perhaps absorbing the italicized epigrams with which they were sprinkled,—but he turned to the middle sheet, where there was generally a raw crayon-sketch by Edgar Marriott, Jr., strong and heart-breakingly poignant. Mat went to the scenes of strikes, and wrote bigoted articles which made blood boil. When there were no strikes he wrote poetry after the manner of Kipling, or compiled strings of unanswerable and upsetting questions which pressed close upon the ultimate riddles of destiny. War was one of his favorite chimeras, and he combated it down the reaches of history upon lines of research peculiar to himself, and most vexing to professors and historians. It was a dull day for Mat when he was not conducting two or three venomous correspondences in his own columns or those of the public press, in defense of his positions.

From the Marriott cousins came the spirit of devotion which pervaded the staff, which kept salaries low and hours voluntarily long, and which convinced the workers that they had a mission, and that the world would be the loser if the "Red Rag" should suspend publication.

So much for the general situation, which, except by Amy, Tolman, and others of their type, was conceded to be triumphant. Mat had lived between Chicago and New York, and when in Chicago had built a wall of reserve between himself and the disapproval of his family. Amy had not, indeed, reconciled herself to the iniquities of her

offspring, but she had been reduced to confining her protests to prayer. Edgar had always made him welcome, and he had established headquarters at the Michigan Avenue house, where he and Eddie sat up till two in the morning over their discussions.

But a change had been coming over Mat, which made Eddie fret and Edgar frown. He who had affected shoddy tweed suits and soft hats, who had ridden in day-coaches and smoked a clay pipe, who had scoffed in the very pages of the magazine at Ames and his eyeglass and his banquets,—he, Mat, was convicted of the purchase of a twelve-dollar silk hat, and was heard inquiring of Amy whether the moths had devoured the dress-suit he bought in college. Amy being a New England housewife, no question could have been a greater insult: she produced the horrid thing out of a pillow-case, and he sent it to be pressed.

He began carrying a walking-stick on Sundays. One morning he appeared at the office in spats, and the office-boy laughed so hard that he choked and had to be slapped between the shoulders.

"Diantha, do *you* know what's come over Mat?" Edgar asked, when she came to take his orders for Christmas shopping.

"Cousin Edgar, why do you ask me? We don't see him at home two meals a week. We always suppose he's over here with you and Eddie."

"He breakfasts here pretty consistently when he's in town, but we haven't seen much of him in the evenings. He goes out with a white silk muffler over his shirt-front, and comes in at one-thirty."

"Where do you suppose he got that muffler?"

"There are plenty of places to get mufflers. A more important question is *why* he got it."

"Who in the world," asked Daisy, looking up from her morning paper,—"who in the world are the Lewiston

Leverings? Miss Dulany, would you mind looking them up in the Social Register if you have it handy? I'd like to know who she was."

"They don't seem to be here, Mrs. Marriott."

"Josie, have *you* ever run across the Lewiston Leverings? I see about them in the society column two or three times a week."

"What does it matter, Mother? There are plenty of people in Chicago we don't know. What have they done?"

"'Among the smart parties seen dancing after the theater at the Lilac Terrace were Mr. and Mrs. Lewiston Levering with the Neddy Dunbars, Miss Claudine Chesbro, and Mr. Marriott Powell.'"

"I'll call up Mat and ask him. They can't be so very smart, or they wouldn't let Mat come to the table with them: he's just as likely to eat with his knife. But I'll ask him . . ." and Josie moved solicitously toward the telephone, one eye on her mother.

"Josephine! Sit right down! You know your father has forbidden you to speak to Mat Powell."

"Well, Mother, he can't seriously mean that, it's so medieval! Goodness knows I don't care about talking to Mat; he's repulsive: the only reason I'm nice to any of the Powells is because Father would skin me if I weren't. But I assure you I don't want to speak to *him*." And she sat herself down on the chaise-longue with a bounce and a billow of petticoats.

"Would you like a piece about the Cubists?"

"There's been a good deal about the Cubists, Mat. Who wants to write it,—Eddie?"

"I want to write it myself."

"You don't know the first thing about Art!"

"I have means of finding out, Ames . . . I have a lady friend who has been telling me a lot about Art."

"I thought you were going out on that stock-yards story?"

"Well, I have a date for this afternoon to look at some privately owned Cubist pictures; and I thought I'd kill two birds with one stone and write them up."

"You can write it if you like, but I won't run it unless it's unusually funny; because if you tried to write seriously about pictures you'd make us a laughing-stock. If you must write about Cubism, write something awfully naïve."

"I'll bet you I know more about Cubism this minute than you do, old arbiter elegantiarum!"

"It wouldn't be difficult . . . Don't tell me you've had a hair cut!"

"It's handier," said Mat, blushing.

"Well, suit yourself. Only it gives your head that nasty, slippery eggy look, especially when the man gets you all over Ed. Pinaud's Extract."

"That's a matter of opinion. At any rate I'm not getting prematurely bald," and Mat swung out of the editorial sanctum, after one last smoothing of his curtailed locks.

III

"It doesn't seem possible a man can be as sincere as you say you are," murmured Claudine. "Sugar?"

"Nobody ever accused *you* of being sincere," retorted Mat. "I'll put my own cream in. Now did they?"

Claudine swept her eyelashes all the way up, then all the way down: smiled ever so little: and touched his thumb with the tip of her finger as she gave him the tea-cup. The cup immediately crashed to the floor.

"Damn!" said Claudine, without emphasis. "You shan't have another. That's one of the dishes Eve brought from China, and if it isn't priceless she told me a lie about it . . . Let it trickle around: it will soon evaporate, and Maria will carry away the bits after you leave."

"I'm frightfully ashamed. You tell Eve so; I shan't dare face her . . . But you didn't answer my question: are you ever sincere?"

"I don't talk about the things that are real to me; I —I'm afraid."

"You afraid? Of what?"

There was a silence before she answered with simplicity.

"I am afraid of love." He was left staring into her eyes, while his heart thumped.

"Oh, it's too easy; you tempt me," she cried suddenly, and laughed.

"You meant that just the same," he replied, unmoved by her change of tone.

"I never mean anything seriously; you said so yourself."

"I'm writing a novel about you," he said irrelevantly.

"Oh! You think you know me so well?"

"I intend to find out everything about you."

"What are you calling it?"

"'My Witch-Girl'!"

"You darling!"

"But I'll never let you read it."

"Oh, yes, you will . . . Don't let your researches into my deep nature keep you from your regular work."

"Botheration! That reminds me you never took me to see the Cubists, and I was to write an article about them this evening."

"Never you mind; this little tea-party was much more important. I'll write you as much as you like about the Cubists, better than you could do it, and let you have it to-morrow morning."

Mat was still a little jealous of intrusion into the beloved "Rag." "Don't," he said. "I'll write something else."

"Oh, but I'd like to. Do you suppose the high and mighty Mr. Bicknell would print it?"

"I'd break his silly head open if he didn't:—but that's not interesting . . . I want you to tell me *why* you're afraid."

"Love is horrid," said Claudine. She had a voice with a deep, harrowing break in it, which stirred all the romantic yearnings of Mat's nature.

It will be remembered that at an early age he had been in love with Mrs. Gurney; and although this chronicle has of necessity passed over certain periods of time, Mat's heart had continued to beat, and while it beat it was certain to be more or less at the disposal of some goddess. Edgar was wont to refer to Mat's "sentimental journeys from Unsuitable to Impossible." Most of his loves were between five and twenty years his seniors, and few of them talked English, in the stricter sense of the term. A personal acquaintance was immaterial; for two months he collected photographs of Theda Bara, and pursued her image from cinema to cinema.

But Mat never told, and even Edgar would have been surprised to learn, how much more warmly he talked *about* his loves than directly *to* them. He adopted a witty, worldly tone in speaking of the opposite sex, which concealed the fact that in a *tête-à-tête* he was consumed with embarrassment. Girls, in so far as they differed from Diantha, were complete mysteries to him, and wherein they resembled her, he found them lacking in piquancy. On a few occasions his enthusiasm had carried him into positive courtship; but they had been odd, unsatisfactory scenes ending in sarcasm and snubbings, and far down in his soul he carried the mortifying belief that he was destined never to be loved.

Claudine represented the upward swing of the wheel from its nadir. Claudine found him interesting,—his aspect, his opinions, his future, did not tell him so, explicitly and tacitly, dozens of times a day? Did she not make it easy for him to see her, carrying him along from one engagement to another? Was she not easy to talk to, easy to become intimate with, in a way which suggested that their natures had mystic affinity? Did she not voluntarily confide to him her thoughts on that most sacred of themes,—on Love?

"All these years——"

ran an anonymous poem in that month's "Rag," conceived with extreme technical fredom,—

"All these years
I have gone mad in dreams
At the odor of jasmine.
I asked in the shops, describing
(Inadequately, I concede).
'Ah,' they told me, 'You require
Attar of roses!'

"I bought their horrid attar,
Extracted from roses.
Prickly, stout-stemmed, unimaginative
Objects:—
And was disappointed in my own capacity

In that the madness withheld
Its potency

"But now, now,
I have found the intoxicant wild sweetness
So long, so thirstily craved.
The perfume that drives deliciously mad
—Listen, fools—
Is true jasmine . . .

"Fore knowledge . . .
Of you . . ."

"Why do you print that rot, Bicky?" asked Garrity, turning up his nose over a proof-sheet.

"I gotta," replied Bicknell, crossly. "But the 'Rag' can't stand more than about so much of it. If it comes to the point I'll fight him to a finish on it. It isn't even spicy: it's just wish-wash."

"It doesn't rhyme."

"I shouldn't care so much about that if it were the least bit interesting. What do you and I care,—what does anybody care,—about Mat's taste in perfumery?"

Mat's "witch-girl" was not a typical product of the Middle West, though a desolating rumor had it that she came of respectable parents still resident in Toledo. Chicago was indebted for her presence to the continued hospitality of the Lewiston Leverings; and the Lewiston Leverings, even if unknown to Daisy Marriott, bore a name not unfamiliar to Tolman and his brother bankers. Levering had come from Tennessee, had made money hand over fist on the Stock Exchange, and had selected to help him spend it a wife from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. It so happened that neither he nor she had known many Chicagoans before moving there, as he had been educated at the Sorbonne and she in an Eastern school which had not been in vogue in her adopted city; so they had formed such a circle as was most accessible. Mrs. Levering had a highly-cultivated voice, and a social instinct; her husband mixed cocktails to admiration, and talked amusingly,

with a Southern accent, "on any subject except baseball," as he admitted.

It will therefore be readily understood that after three years' residence in their Sheridan Road apartment, they knew most of the musical circle, a good many newspaper critics and authors-in-general, an assortment of young married people with plenty of money to lose at bridge; they entertained visiting celebrities, particularly those of the stage; and they were being gradually "discovered" by the more advanced and inquisitive of the "old settlers"—Eve Levering's term. To do them justice, they were no snobs, and cared not a whit whether they were asked to the Assemblies; they had kind hearts, they liked amusement, and they practiced no painful rigidity of conduct. They had not as yet been tracked down by the good ladies who are ever on the lookout for recruits,—auriferous recruits,—to charitable committees; so their money was their own to play with, to spend on happy-go-lucky entertaining, and to give away as the whim struck them, among their pet geniuses.

Claudine had met Lewiston Levering in Paris, while studying something or other; and Eve was thereby entitled to calculate her age at a minimum of thirty-two. She had acted a little, recited to music, danced on people's lawns by moonlight, dabbled in spiritualism; and she had come to Chicago with an exhibition of her own productions in the then uncommon medium of batik. The designs were so exotic one could hardly decide whether they were disgusting or not. They had occasioned discussion.

Following an invitation to stop over a week-end with the Leverings, she had stayed with them now some three weeks, and Eve was little disposed to part with her. She added to the Levering parties a touch of knowingness and chic which, having once tasted, they could not forego. Her personality and her costumes did not permit her to remain unnoticed in any company, and the voice which Mat had found morbid, murmuring, melancholy and

musical, was to be distinguished from other voices. She had money, and there was nothing of the sycophant about her; she had likewise brains; and to culminate, she who was familiar with heaven knows what esoteric coteries in the great capitals, did not disdain the personalities to be met in an apartment on Sheridan Road.

I am unable to state why the clamor of the great capitals for her presence was so far stilled, during these winter months, as to permit her to remain in farthest Gaul; possibly her statement that "love was horrid" *was* for once sincere, and veiled some concrete damage to her emotions. One can hardly believe that the fascination of Mat Powell and two or three other fluttering moths was the best she could have wrung from life, judging from the standpoint of interest. One inclines therefore to the belief that she was reposing herself upon their provincial simplicity.

The tails of Mat's evening-coat,—be that as it may,—grew shiny from riding in taxicabs; green-gray orchids traveled in boxes to the Leverings' door; and Mat's exchequer became very naturally depleted. He borrowed from Eddie and from Edgar, on the scale adapted to his modest estate. Worse than this, he fretted and worried over possible means of extracting larger profits from the "Red Rag."

IV

Of all this Amy knew only hints and scattered facts; but to a woman practiced in adversity, straws are but too indicative of the wind's quarter. And when she chose to turn her thoughts from her children, they rested with little satisfaction on her husband.

As to Vesey, Amy knew little except that to look at him was distressing, and to listen to him was disturbing. He had now for three years drawn his salary from Tolman, and repaid most of it to the same benefactor. One or two "raises" he had received, but they had served chiefly to amortize his debt at a rate about twenty dollars a month faster than before. Vesey was one who took little interest in this long-drawn restitution for the past, more particularly as he was repaying eight thousand dollars which he had lost almost before seeing it, and from which he had not extracted the slightest pleasure. He could not observe that the wages of virtue were any better worth struggling after than those of sin, monetarily speaking, whereas the labor necessary to their acquisition was decidedly less entertaining. The straight and narrow path made little appeal. When he left home each morning he pictured himself toiling along this path, in tight shoes, and harnessed by many leather straps to a wagon in which rode the conventionalized forms of Amy, Mat, Diantha and Herby, all taking their ease and gazing at the scenery.

For the first time in his life Vesey Powell had consistently gone on doing that which was distasteful to him, and he found his nature to the last degree strained and exasperated. His temper became uncertain, and on this, at least, Amy had formerly been able to count with some

security. He stifled oaths, he let fly loud objurgations. He calculated day by day, hour by hour, the infinitesimal diminution of his debt. His familiarity with one, at least, of Tolman's companies had shown him how little such a sum meant to a man of Tolman's vast resources. And yet, by years of toil, he had barely succeeded in shuffling off half his load.

Amy would sit behind the coffee-pot, regarding Vesey with an anxious face. He had aged; the hair was receding up the long incline of his skull, his skin had fallen into grooves and pouches. His eyes, instead of sliding and shining, sidewise, had learned a trick of staring at something about on a level with his knees. His lips twitched when he was irritated; and this was not seldom. He looked, in a word, ill.

If Diantha came down late to meals, he scolded her. If Mat was known to be in town, but elected to stay on Michigan Avenue, Vesey reproved his audience, from which of necessity the offender was excluded. It was his sharpness while Herby studied at the living-room table, which made Amy dumb when she would have protested with the boy against slipping out for a game of pool.

"This can't last," said Vesey to himself, every night before he went to sleep.

"It can't last," thought Amy. But whereas he looked forward to any change, however little alluring, she dreaded variation, feeling sure it must be for the worse.

"Let sleeping dogs lie," thought Amy. After all, two years and a half of security, and solvency limited only by an indeterminate debt to her own cousin Tolman, was more good than she had thought Fate held stored for her.

After bringing home a number of unsatisfactory reports, Herby in January omitted to bring home any at all; but a note by mail from the principal intimated to Vesey that the perpetuation of the ties which bound Herby and his alma mater would cause needless pain to both, inasmuch as he was learning nothing, and certainly com-

ing to no good by idling about the streets after school-hours.

"I'll lick the hide off him," exclaimed his father. "He's stupid, and he's bad. He'll never be a credit to you, Amy."

"He's been as good as gold till this year," his wife made answer, trembling. "This isn't the time to scold him and torment him; we ought to help him through."

"I don't believe in it; he's not worth the trouble. Not an ounce of brains, except for getting into mischief."

Amy's lips opened, but closed on some sharp words unspoken. "There are other people who aren't particularly worth while," she might have said, "who are glad enough to have me stand by them." But it must be explained that Vesey had been so long cut off from vagary and adventure that he looked upon himself as a typical paterfamilias, and along with the sterling qualities of the type, considered himself entitled to a modicum of the traditional irascibility.

"Turn him out, and make him hustle for himself," said Vesey, "if he's determined not to profit by the advantages of a good education."

Mat recommended, with an eye to Herby's mechanical bent, a technical college, and the plan approved itself to Amy and Diantha. Amy saw her youngest an engineer, tunneling the Andes and bridging the Congo.

But when Herbert walked sullenly into the dining-room and sat down to his supper, the discussion did not run according to schedule. To begin with, there was a furrow in the boy's brow, and a set to his jaw, which warned of inward wrath; and his boots clumped ominously.

"You'd better see this, my boy," said his father, interrupting himself in the service of creamed chipped beef long enough to toss over McDougald's letter.

"He told me he was writing you. I didn't go to his rotten school to-day, I wouldn't go near it if he paid me."

"He's not likely to do that; you're fired, straight and plain."

Herby took a gulp of water, and slammed his glass down on the table.

"Tell us how it came about, Herby dear."—Thus Amy.

"They're darned sissies;—sneaks."

"What happened?"

To abbreviate, I will here state that his family never did learn just what had befallen Herby during his past week at school; even Diantha was given only dark adumbrations of a plot which involved one Marcus Coy, a reptilian teacher named Simmons, and the arch-hypocrite, Mr. McDougald, Ph.D. But as the consequences were unusually free from ambiguity, the point was passed over as academic.

"Well, what's next on your program? You're not a rich man's son like Eddie; you can't tour the Eastern boarding-schools till you find one that will graduate you. You've missed your chance of a college education for good and all, I'm afraid . . ."

"Vesey! . . . We had thought, Herby, you might go to one of the technical schools and work toward an engineer's degree."

"College education! Engineer's degree! Gosh! You think I've got brains."

"You *have* plenty of brains."

"I haven't got brains, and I haven't got style," said Herby, emphasizing his views with a knife-handle. "And it's style you're after, all of you. You want me to wear a white collar every day till I die, don't you?" Here he looked menacingly right and left.

"Most certainly," said his father in crisp syllables.

"Well, I'll tell you right now, I'm better off in a flannel shirt and overalls. I never was so well suited as that summer in the shop. I don't care about this darned education and degrees and travel and Eastern accents. A mechanic makes money enough to live better than we do,

and he knows better than to wade out beyond his depth." He jerked a vulgar thumb toward the Lake Shore Drive.

"Herby, you needn't be rude."

"You'd be rude if you'd been talking to that blathering McDougald. To hear him, you'd think a fellow might as well be in hell as try to get along without a diploma. Well, look at Abraham Lincoln! And George Washington, for that matter!"

"Herby, you must not use such words."

"I know a lot worse ones than that," muttered the recalcitrant, privately to his apple sauce; and this muttering did much to revive his self-esteem.

"It's no use talking to him this evening, he's as obstinate as a mule. I've a good mind to put him on bread and water for a day or two . . . Well, sir, what's your own idea?"

"I'm going back to the shop. I want to get to be a first class motor mechanic, and then I'm going to start the one and only reliable automobile repair shop."

"Oh, *no*, Herby."

"Why not? That's honest, isn't it? And there's money in it."

"It's not respectable."

"Respectable! Why isn't it just as respectable as being an office-boy in the bank?"

"Do you want to have Diantha tell people her brother is a laboring man?"

("Mother, you *are* silly!")

"I'd just as soon be a laboring man as sponge on my cousin's money, like Mat does. What do you mean by 'laboring man'? I'll join the union; that's very aristocratic."

"I suppose you won't be happy till you go and live in a slum somewhere, with your fellow aristocrats."

"Turn me out whenever you want to; but if you'll let me wash off the grease at the kitchen sink, I'd rather keep on living at home. I'm not one of these geniuses

that's out for experience: I just want to be warm and have three square meals a day, and draw my pay-check on Saturday, and smoke a pipe when I please. I'll pay for my board, and I'll take the family to a movie once a month."

This, in effect, was Herby's declaration of rights, and he could not be budged from his position by tears, threats or cajolery. Mat approved, shrugging off the responsibility; Diantha cared little, except that her mother was vexed. What grieved Amy in the arrangement she found it difficult to express: honest toil is no bugbear to New Englanders; but she came of a line of ministers, lawyers, and independent farmers, and among the degradations of her marriage she had intensified her pride of race,—a pride of self-respecting petty gentility. She could not reconcile herself to putting up Herby's luncheon in the tin pail—which with inverted pride he insisted on carrying while his fellow "laboring men" regaled themselves at restaurants and saloons. She did not like him in the kitchen before supper, with his arms black to the elbow. She chose to find inconvenient the hour at which he demanded breakfast, though no other household arrangement had drawn complaints from her.

"Well, if no other member of my family can graduate and get a diploma, it's up to me," thought Diantha; and she shut herself off from her enemies in school, by "grinding" at her lessons.

V

One day in February, when the snow was dissolving into filthy puddles, and the eaves dripped, she came back from school to find her mother shivering beside the stove. She was in a fever. Diantha put her to bed and administered such remedies as were traditional in the household; but the temperature would not be conquered. It was necessary to call a doctor, and he made numerous visits. "The grippe," he said, and looked for a recovery in a week. But two weeks, and three, dragged by before Amy really "laid hold on life," as the hymn has it. She had relaxed from her anxieties, and found a luxury in lying supine, letting her family for one breathing-space manufacture or import its own morale, while she drifted along in weakness.

Her family, during the critical days of her illness, rallied to the emergency, nursed her by turns, and filled her place with clumsy good-will so that she was little missed. Daisy sent over delicacies which she could not eat, but on which the healthy Powells regaled themselves whole-heartedly. Mat stayed at home, Vesey and Herby buried the hatchet, Diantha swam triumphantly through the domestic eddies.

But as weeks wore along, and she progressed no further toward dressing and going downstairs, the velvet began to wear thin. The boys returned more or less to their usual ways,—Herby to loud noises, Mat to unexplained absences from Hickory Place. Diantha had attacks of nerves and tears, sat up till twelve o'clock over the books she was forced to neglect by daylight, and developed headaches.

The doctor gave one of those prescriptions impossible of fulfillment. ". . . Nervous strain . . ." he murmured. "Heart action irregular. . . . Complete freedom from worry. . . . Warmer climate. . . . Baths at Augusta. . . . I won't guarantee your mother's health, or even her life, Miss Powell, if she goes on killing herself by inches. She's a highly-strung woman; she must be made to relax, shift responsibility."

All this Diantha repeated to Vesey, behind closed doors, her teeth chattering with fright.

"My dear little girl . . . hush, child. . . . We must handle it some way. I'll take it in hand, I'll think what can be done. Perhaps we could all move South. . . ." Vesey brightened at the prospect of a legitimate change. "Give me to-night to think; you and I must work it out together."

Diantha kissed him and dried her eyes, feeling for him the same irrational fondness which Amy had retained through twenty-five years.

The following morning he spoke to her seriously after breakfast. "I have a plan," said he. "You'll know a little later." And he kissed her again, with a ceremonial solemnity which made her wonder.

During the afternoon a hamper made its appearance, filled with fruit and a bottle of sherry, likewise a quilted pink bed-jacket.

"Vesey is such a goose," said Amy, smiling. "But do you know, Diantha, I've given up worrying. Somehow I feel things must straighten themselves out; I've done what I can."

At six o'clock came a special delivery letter to Diantha.

"Must be away from home to-night in pursuance of my plan," it read. "Don't let mother worry."

In the morning's mail arrived the following extraordinary document:

(No address)

"My darling Amy:

"I have thought it all out, and decided that what hampers you and the children is my presence. Without me, your character, your connections, your charm, would have made life easy for you; and in spite of what you have been to me all these years, for your sake I would to God I had never met you.

"Before your illness you must have realized, as I did, that the present situation was impossible. I was breaking under the strain of a bondage worse than slavery, and the future must have terrified you.

"My duty is clear to me. I must release you from the drag of my presence. You need not scruple to accept for yourself and your children the help from your kinsfolk which your delicate sense of honor forbade your soliciting for me. It may seem hard in me, but it is the door to comfort for you, and to those luxuries which mean more than necessities. Do not fear but that I can take care of myself. The past two years and seven months have proved my business capacity and my persistence under obstacles. And do not fear, my darling, lest I should make way with myself; even if life were valueless to me, I love you too dearly to cause you that pain.

"For you have loved me, unworthy as I have been. Your love has been my beacon, and will always be, and I shall look forward to no other happiness than rejoining you when and where it may be expedient; but for your sake I am taking this step of publicly dissociating our fates. I am writing Tolman to this effect.

"Do not seek to keep in touch with me. I shall watch over your welfare, but you will not be able to communicate with me, as I shall be hundreds of miles from you, and I shall even leave my own name behind me.

"With your wonderful deep sympathy you will realize I am doing this for the best. But how it hurts!

"Give my love to the precious children, and tell them not to hang their heads at the name of their father, however the world may judge.

"My adored wife, I can write no more. Good-by!"

After reading her letter, Amy fell white-lipped against her pillows. It was an ignominious end to her fight,—this commonplace desertion in time of sickness. During the morning tears crept continually down her cheeks. Diantha must read the letter some time, but she hid it from her as long as possible.

At lunch-time Tolman appeared, in a fury. He was admitted under protest to the sick-room, and cautioned not to excite the patient. His rage was, indeed, strangled on his lips when he saw the beaten woman lying in her bed, age printed on her features and weakness in her attitude.

"I suppose you've heard from Vesey," he began.

She drew the letter from under her pillow, and handed it to him, her eyes closed. He ran through it.

"Hm!" he said. "The lure of the open road." Then he was silent, tapping with his glasses against the envelope.

"Now you can divorce him, Amy," he finally said. "In a year, or two years, or whatever length of time it is. Of course I'll see you through till the children are on their own feet." (The thought of Mat was still bitter to him, and he often prayed that the vicious "Red Rag" might fail, and bring the young jackanapes to reason.)

He looked at Amy. She had not spoken, and her eyes were still closed; but her lips were shut, and she was shaking her head slowly from side to side.

"You've got to, for your own sake and the children's. He's through with you; he's off skylarking in stocks and bonds again. I don't want to hurt you, but I want you to appreciate his quality:—he wrote me he had taken the liberty of—of charging to my account a basket of

fruit, a dressing-gown, and a subscription to the 'Tribune.' You know, I could have him jailed for that." The brows of the silent face contracted in pain. Repentant, Tolman patted her arm. "I'm a brute, my dear. But the sooner you're rid of him the better."

"Don't argue with me, Tolman," she said, in the faintest of voices. "I don't feel I can argue, but I know I'll never divorce Vesey." And into those few faint words she put such finality that he had no more to say.

"Would you take him back, then?"

She nodded.

"Would you like him back *now?* I can find him in no time, if you say the word. . . . Detectives . . ."

"Don't bother," came the clear, pale voice. "He'll come back. . . . He'll get himself into trouble. . . . He's very fond of me. . . . You'll see, he'll be back soon . . ."

"She's irrational. She makes me cross."

Tolman was permitted, in Daisy's boudoir, to put his feet up on the seat of a chair; and thus extended, he was enjoying his cigar after a *tête-à-tête* dinner with his wife, To an observer there would have been something touching in Daisy's aspect,—in the trace of her girlish manner which remained when she laid aside her trappings of majesty. The Daisy Pellew with whom Tolman had fallen in love had not been forty-nine years of age, she had never paid twenty-five dollars for a pair of shoes, nor had she experienced the doubtful blessings of facial massage; she had not imagined the existence of four grown children and an art gallery, she had not studied bridge. It was this Daisy Pellew, out of the irrevocable past, who always tried to come back to dinner with Tolman. He was too well-acquainted with her to be touched, but he was pleased, and that was the next best thing. So while she ruined her eyes over a piece of *petit point*, he smoked and regarded her benignly, and talked to her about the Powells.

"She makes me cross," said Tolman, then.

"I think she's rather fine. It's the sort of thing you read about."

"Well, any good woman would stick by her husband through ordinary bad luck; but he's shown himself unprincipled time after time, and now he's dropped her completely."

She rocked back and forth, and thanked God that the lines had fallen to her in pleasant places.

"In a way it's more responsibility for you, having her entirely on your hands."

"I've generally regarded Vesey as a liability rather than an asset. The responsibility doesn't matter. Amy's a splendid mother, and she does her own disciplining."

"Of course there's the money."

"Really, you know, Daisy, they're no great luxury. I believe the whole family didn't cost me a cent more last year than Fan's new roadster did. I can carry that part without feeling it, and the two boys are at work now."

"Yes, but do you think it's a good thing for them to let their mother and sister lie back on your money?"

"I don't know that I approve of the principle; but, by George, when it comes to a question of sweet old Amy pulling in her belt another notch, while I sit just around the corner smoking fifty-cent cigars,—principles can go hang. She's not a United Charities case; she's my cousin, and I'm fond of her."

"I don't mind the money specially," said Daisy, "because I know you're glad to spare it, and *I'm* glad you're in a position to be so generous. But there are little things that grate on me,—I mean when they take their benefits for granted. I love to send them things, but I hate to have them count on me for the Thanksgiving turkey,—do you understand? Of course Vesey was the worst, but I don't think Amy is backward about it."

"Diantha's proud enough. She took her Christmas

gold-piece as if it burnt her fingers; positively made a face at it."

Daisy said nothing. Diantha was not a favorite of hers.

"That was a pretty dress you gave her; she was a regular picture. I think she's prettier than her mother was, but she hasn't a scrap of Amy's high spirits. I wish you could have seen Amy at twenty; by George, she was positively fascinating. I hate to look at her these days, she's got so sad and spiritless and old."

"You forget we all grow old, Tolman."

"Not that way: *you* don't change in your looks, and you don't lose your vitality. Anybody that you went to school with would recognize you on the street to-day. Amy's been regularly ground between the millstones."

"Does she plan to go away?"

"No, she won't do it. I tried my best. I think she has a superstitious feeling that she must be there, in her own place, when Vesey comes back. And she doesn't want to add to her debt,—which she keeps strict account of, you know, and plans to pay off some time, out of some non-existent fund or other. I've insisted on their getting a maid, so Diantha can finish up her school year; she looks badly."

"She's a scrawny, delicate sort of girl." To everyone her taste; and Daisy could not but consider that there was a superiority in the physical type of herself and her broad-shouldered daughters.

VI

If Josie's party had no other result, beyond a number of reciprocal invitations, it at least served to dislodge Edgar Marriott from his Michigan Avenue fastness; and one experience of society—"and that band!"—convinced him that he had been coddling his nervous system unnecessarily. Sustained work was beyond him, but intercourse and movement were not.

"I shall end my days as a butterfly bachelor," he said grimly, to a white tie he was adjusting.

He was made welcome among his old circle. He bought an electric, and engaged a discreetly liveried dusky brother to drive him about,—crossing the Rush Street bridge several times a day. Josie claimed the credit of this social resurrection, and gained some fame for herself thereby.

This was a temporary phase. Edgar was not the man to continue believing in himself while his activity was limited to intellectual dinners, and luncheons with visiting lions. And when spring came, he exploded a bomb.

In the meantime, the two families pursued their course, Hickory Place maintaining itself, without relish, on a supply of Tolman's checks and Daisy's old clothes. Josie, now known to the press as Miss Josephine Marriott, and to her circle as "Jo," had been twice reported engaged, but on insufficient evidence.

Herby continued to carry a dinner-pail, and Mat to haunt Claudine. Her writings now appeared with some frequency in the "Rag," and Ames, who knew cleverness when he met it, offered no protest. "But there is a miasma hanging over her work, don't you think? Sort

of scummy? Does she believe in anything? I think she's a devil-woman, and has bewitched him."

In spite of catastrophe, Amy mended gradually, and the little house ran well enough with one Hulda Olsen at the helm. Diantha worked desperately at her lessons, developed insomnia, and passed her final examinations on her raw nerves; but she had no pleasure in walking up for her diploma. After the graduation exercises she came home and threw herself on her own bed, where she lay without undressing, all night. She had finished a hateful period in her life, finished it in spite of obstacles; but it was never to be remembered from that day forth.

A week later, Edgar was dining at Tolman's. It was a delicious June evening; pink clouds hung in the sky, and the air blew off the lake.

"Yes, I'm leaving Miss Dulany to shut up the house," Daisy told her brother-in-law. "We're all going down to Cambridge for Fan's Commencement, and then we'll see him off for Europe before we go to Southampton."

"Ah! So Fanning's off for Europe," exclaimed Edgar (who had already surmised as much).

"Yes, it's a pity you won't see him this summer; he did so enjoy his visits to Redgate."

"I may see him."

"Oh, Edgar! You don't mean you'll go down to Boston with us! That would be perfect."

"No, thanks. I can't get away before the end of the month. But I'm planning to start for Europe myself."

"Edgar! . . . Tolman, do you hear that? Our anchorite is going to Europe."

General surprise was expressed.

"Alone?"

"I'm taking a secretary. I mean to do a little writing, if the spirit moves me."

"Where are you going? When do you sail? How long are you to be gone? Where did you find the secretary?"

"The secretary is a nice, well-educated young girl."

There was an awkward silence. Either Edgar was joking, or he was contemplating marriage, or else he had said something better left unsaid.

"What's her name, Uncle Edgar?" Josie broke the ice.

"Miss Diantha Pow——"

"Uncle, you scoundrel! We all thought you had a bride."

"I haven't provided a bride, but there *is* a chaperon."

"Amy?"

"Yes."

"How did you ever persuade Amy to leave home?"

"I told her she had no right to deprive Di of this opportunity."

"That's a lovely idea," said Tolman, heartily. "And you won't regret it. Those two are as good company as any man needs to ask for."

Edgar could see that Daisy's soul was vexed. "Where are you going to make your headquarters?" she inquired abruptly.

"Some nice little place in France or Switzerland. Will Fanning be along that way?"

"I don't believe so; no, I doubt it. They're going to travel rapidly through the principal cities."

"Who's 'they'?"

"Three other boys. That Quinny Babcock that visited him out here with you, and somebody Grey from New York, and another boy from Memphis, named Devine. . . . Splendid chaps, all of them."

"Is Di really going to be your secretary, Uncle?"

"I've acquired one of those little collapsible typewriters, and she's going to work up a dazzling rate of speed on it."

"How about shorthand?"

"Oh, we'll manage."

"Edgar," said Daisy, in a lower tone, "I'm the last

person to interfere with a generous action; but don't you think it's rather hard on Di to spoil her like this, and accustom her to luxury she can't have?"

"Well, Daisy, Di's very likely to marry some rich young fellow, and she ought to know how to spend money gracefully. But aside from that, this is a strictly business proposition. I pay her a salary and expenses, and she pays me back the salary in exchange for her mother's expenses. It's logic itself. And as for luxury—well! we'll be bound to live within certain well-defined limits; I'm not made of money, you know, like your fat husband. And I'm keeping up two establishments and an artistic son. . . . By the way, he perpetrated a scandal; he went and paid two thousand dollars for a little bit of a thing some chap told him was a Tanagra figurine. . . . I think my mother would have had apoplexy if she had seen him come home with it."

It was easy to conclude Edgar would not be moved by her reasoning; and indeed Daisy had never been sure that the intimacy of Fanning and Diantha, developing under his roof, had not been fostered by his express countenance.

She could, of course, change her plans and go with Fan to Europe; but the modern parent's morbid dread of inflicting her company on her offspring deterred her. Fan's plans were made to travel with three men; one mother would be supererogatory. And Daisy had reason to know that a parent's presence is not necessarily a guaranty of the children's discretion. The Marriotts, mother and son, would be forced to see more of Edgar and the Powells than would Fan alone.

But other channels of influence could be opened.

"I met Cora Jessey on the street to-day," said Edgar. "I don't believe she's been back before in ten years. She's stopping with Félice."

"I must have her to luncheon,"—and at the moment she spoke, Daisy had half-planned what she meant to

say to Cora, whom a benign Providence had thrown in her way. Is it not conceded that where nature provides an ill she likewise furnishes a remedy?

Barely three words were necessary to reach the apprehension of her astute and cosmopolitan schoolmate. No need to expatiate on impecunious cousins and designing brothers-in-law; she said merely that she wanted her children to know the children of her old friends, and this summer would be a chance for Fanning to get acquainted with Suzette. Cora was quite aware that Daisy's son was a more substantial and eligible match than the battered gentry of continental watering-places, and Cora could influence her niece's destiny. It did not lie within Daisy's plans that Fanning should necessarily marry a young person who had spent her second decade in running wild over Europe in the innocent manner incomprehensible to Europeans; but she flattered herself enough on the knowledge of her boy to think that Suzette could be exorcised when she had served her turn.

And so it occurred that when the Messrs. Grey, Babcock, Devine and Marriott stepped aboard the Hamburg-American liner, they were marked by a woman already settled into her deck-chair,—a gray-haired woman of impeccable finish, who spoke four languages—including English—without accent, and who had been to school with Daisy Marriott.

VII

"You'd better sleep most of the way over," Edgar advised Diantha. But with the buoyancy of eighteen she had forgotten vagrant father, high-school and insomnia all together; she put in sixteen-hour days at shuffle-board, dancing and ship's concerts, and exercised an ascendancy over five different college youths most of whom she never saw again after the sad partings at Cherbourg and Paris.

Diantha's charm vanished with her self-confidence and reappeared with it; and her self-confidence was more than usually robust after the voyage. Every new impression struck home, and registered itself in her brain; her cheeks were perpetually flushed, and her heart beat as though she lived at a high altitude. She could not keep her feet on the pavements. Even the society of two semi-invalids was powerless to depress her, and after exhausting them she saw the sights of Paris alone or with new-made acquaintances. All Paris was American in July, and every American was a potential friend.

Acting under Edgar's orders, she performed the functions of a courier, and in so doing, put some of the breath of life into her high-school French, though she was still more familiar with "*l'hirondelle*," "*l'amour*" and "*le crépuscule*" than with practical difference between "*soixante-quinze*," "*quatre-vingt quinze*," and "*quatorze*." But she bought herself blouses at the Galeries Lafayette and post-cards on the Rue de Rivoli, pursued Baedeker's three-starred wonders in the Louvre, and yawned through the tragedies of Racine,—feeling herself at every step a heroine of romance.

After the voyage Edgar realized to his chagrin that he had overestimated his forces. "I'm too strong for a valetudinarian and not strong enough for a tourist," he told himself. Amy, for her part, was over-excited by travel and change of scene, and morning after morning he and she admitted over their *petit-pains* that they had not closed their eyes.

After a week of this, Edgar wrote for rooms in Grenoble, which spot he chose for three reasons, namely that it had a renowned library, a view of Mont Blanc, and a certain proximity to Chambéry, Geneva, and the haunts of Jean Jacques Rousseau, about whom he was planning a monograph.

"Pack up to-morrow, Di, and dust off the typewriter; we're going to settle down in the country."

"Oh!" said Di, lifting her nose from the bottle of perfume she had lately purchased, "When are we going? Shall I get tickets?"

"Day after to-morrow morning, an all-day ride."

"I wonder," said Di, "if I could pack mother's things this evening, and my own to-morrow night. I have a sort of engagement for lunch to-morrow. Freddy was going to drive Letitia Conway and me out to St. Germain-en-Laye."

"Child, you'll be tired out, running in every direction and packing at night."

"Let her do it, Amy; she's young and supple."

"I wonder if Bénoîte has sent my hat."

"Not yet."

"I'll stop around for it in the morning if it doesn't come."

"You seem to set great store by that hat, my beauty."

"So would you, if you'd sunk Cousin Daisy's whole Commencement present in it."

"And you flatter yourself you've picked a winner?"

"You wait and see," said Diantha darkly, pirouetting to work off her animal spirits.

The next day was fine; the hat had made its appearance in time to dazzle the adults before they pottered off in a *fiacre* to the Bois. Diantha was dressed and ready for her excursion, and there was nothing to do except sit beside the open French window, and glance occasionally through the railings of the balcony to the street, where Freddy's touring-car would soon make itself recognized, if not by its tint, then by its tootings. A pot of columbines stood on the balcony, tribute from a swain. Diantha thought her room enchantingly foreign, though it bore such a marked resemblance to other French hotel bedrooms as to have calmed the rapture of a more experienced traveler. A flowered carpet, a dark figured wall; a high gilded mirror over the washstand; a tottering table covered with red plush, bearing a blotting-book, some purple ink, a withered, sharp-pointed pen and the desiccated breakfast tray; damask curtains of venerable tone; a faint general aroma of mold and dry-goods. It will hardly be believed that Diantha never closed the door on herself in this apartment without ecstasy.

Far prettier than the room was its occupant, who was now wrinkling her brow over a phrase-book in the sunshine. She was dressed in dark gray linen, with a crisp fall of lace marking a point at the throat; and the renowned hat was a toque entirely compounded of rosebuds of a vivacious character. Bénoîte in creating it had doubtless counted upon some purchaser's ability to throw its insistent pink into focus by the aid of subtle powder and a lip-stick; but Diantha had cast off the likeness of a narcissus in favor of that of a Killarney rose, and asked no odds of the beauty-shop. Sargent might have painted her head and shoulders at a sitting, to enchant the world; the face fragile, a glow of pearl

and flame against the obscure; the varied honey-brown of her hair modulating into the cream of her neck and the foam of her laces; the gray dress artfully recalling and impressing the dark gray of her eyes.

"*C'est un monsieur qui vous attend en bas, mademoiselle!*"

Thus the infant page-boy at the door. She scrambled to her feet, striving to collect a phrase.

"*Oui, je venez—tout de suite*——"

"And, flushed with the mental exertion, she ran down some five flights of stairs which paralleled the course of the elevator (for the elevator was a sacred fetich and one did not expect it to run except on holidays, or for the gratification of guests of unquestioned rank). Half-way across the lobby she stopped short.

"No, '*venirai*,'" she said firmly. And quite content, she greeted her escort.

This was a cleanly youth but recently an A.B. of Columbia University, to whom his father with touching confidence had seen fit to entrust a touring-car and a bulging letter of credit for the summer. As he figures but briefly in this tale, it may suffice to state that he got into much less mischief than one would have expected; that he married no elderly countesses, and did not bankrupt himself at Monte Carlo; and that the working knowledge of France acquired during this holiday made him vastly looked up to, some few years later, when he served as a captain in the S.O.S.

This Freddy, then, ensconced her beside himself on the front seat, leaving Letitia and her partner Bill to entertain one another in the tonneau. Freddy was deeply smitten with Diantha, upon whom his eyes had first rested as she came aboard the boat; and it may be that some fugitive dreams of her, during the ensuing months, kept the countesses at bay, and preserved the Wollmer millions to the use and enrichment of an American bride.

"Just smell!" cried his goddess, deeply inhaling the

warm flavor of gasoline as they bowled along the boulevard. "You could tell it was Paris, with your eyes shut."

"It's an awful funny place," he shouted in reply. "For one thing, I don't believe you can see a person on the street this minute but Americans. Look at all the Baedekers!"

"School-teachers,—poor things," murmured Diantha, pityingly. "Do you suppose they think they're having a good time?"

"I suppose *you* think everybody's like you—can't enjoy life except behind a forty-horse-power engine!"

"Oh, I've been on street-cars in my day," said Diantha, blushing, and seeming to catch through the Parisian aroma a whiff of Hickory Place.

They drove out through the Bois to St. Cloud, and on over the perfect roads into the country. The physiognomy of the landscape—the meanderings of the Seine, and the gracious accommodation thereto of its enfolding hills; the discreet stone faces of the houses, with their mansard roofs, their shutters and their walled gardens; the chatty well-being that emanated from the inhabitants, —all seemed created as setting for a day of pleasure.

Their progress was interrupted at Louveciennes by a person who had, for purposes of his own, set up a merry-go-round. Letitia and Bill, immediately upon seeing it, inaugurated a clamor which could be stilled only by letting them ride on it several times; and Freddy and Diantha did likewise, urging their mottled steeds with cries and tweakings of the mane. The proprietor, a man incredibly fat, looked on benevolently, and rewarded their skill in collecting brass rings as they whirled past with hoary fragments of *sucre d'orge*.

They likewise took the wrong road out of Louveciennes; and Diantha as the French scholar of the party was deputed to interview the passing peasantry and re-establish connections.

"*Où est St. Germain-en-Laye?*" she would open,

garnishing the baldness of her address with a pretty smile. "*Est-il long?*"—(meaning "Is it far?")

Her informant would reply, very rapidly, and in accents unfamiliar to her high-school ears.

"What does he say?" the others would ask.

"We turn around," Diantha would reply, judging, as the others had done, by the gestures with which he was sure to have vivified his discourse, "and then we go off that way."

"It's wonderful; how do you do it? Golly, I wish I'd studied French!"

"It sort of comes to you," she would say, still breathing hard with excitement, but trying to look modest.

By the time they reached St. Germain, the hour was too late to allow of sight-seeing in the stricter Baedekerian sense. They determined to lunch at the Pavillon Henri Quatre, and then ramble through the forest, which might, for aught they knew to the contrary, contain more merry-go-rounds; the point was at least worth investigating. The terrace was crowded, but the arrival of the blonde car passed not unnoticed among menials whose sixth sense had learned to estimate the prodigality of human nature from its externals; so they found themselves moving toward a table beside the railing, where they could eat their luncheon perched high above the Seine, and gaze their fill across the valley.

"Oh, how gay!" cried Diantha.

The little tables sparkled and glittered, and displayed to their passing eyes and noses the freshness of salad, the darkness of wine, the elusive French entrée and the ubiquitous mandarine. Faces friendly even if not those of friends were turned to watch their progress; and the eyes in these faces told Diantha her hat was a success. Beyond the awning one could see a sky of a tender and benignant blue, and far across the valley, shimmering among her hill-slopes, a thrilling glimpse of Paris.

. . . "Di, by all that's holy!" cried a voice, and at the sound, half of the terrace was made acquainted with the fact that the healthy brown-eyed youth had found an old friend.

"Fanning, you dear!" she replied, seizing both his hands.

Presentations took place, rapid and confusing. Fanning was with his three familiars, plus Mrs. Jessey, Miss Suzette Jessey, and another girl. He and the three friends were obviously overjoyed at the meeting with Diantha, and were all for uniting tables and parties. Mrs. Jessey pointed out the impracticability of this. While waiters hovered about with suffering faces, like enlarged but active microbes, Mrs. Jessey's lorgnon had informed her in half-a-look that though Diantha might be an addition to the party, and Freddy Wollmer was not discreditable, Miss Letitia Conway and her Bill were a bit out of the picture.

"Let us all eat in peace where Providence has placed us," she murmured, "and do our associating afterwards."

"Well, don't you forget, Di, we've got to have a long talk," said Fan, wringing her hand again before he let her go on to the spot where Providence, embodied in the head-waiter, was bowing over the back of a chair.

"Now tell me all about them," said Letitia, in clarion tones, before she was fairly seated. "Who's the stunning old lady, and who's that supreme young man?" And she cast a few glances of admiration toward Mrs. Jessey and several toward Fanning. "And doesn't that girl dress well?"

While outlining what she knew of the other party, Diantha's eyes rested often on the "girl who dressed well"—Suzette Jessey; and in the process of looking she became a little less satisfied with her own rosy toque. Suzette was all in black, except for a jade necklace and earrings; and her hat was knowing to a degree. One could not call her pretty; she was sallow, clever-looking

and piquant, her eyes glittered like mica, her teeth flashed in a shrewd little smile, and she played with a cigarette in a black holder. Diantha had of course seen girls who affected a sophisticated style; but there was nothing in Chicago to compare with the finish, the easy malice and the perfectly controlled vivacity of Suzette.

"He always has liked earrings," she thought, recalling the photograph of Anita Somebody at Redgate Farm.

But she could not fail to see that during this luncheon, at least, her own charms outranked Suzette's. Half a dozen times she looked up quickly to find Fan's eyes just leaving her face, while Freddy scowled unhappily by her side. She could see the men glancing at her and discussing her.

"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego," she said to herself.

After luncheon they foregathered, and the men began making plans involving the presence of the decorative Miss Powell by their respective sides in various public places.

"Oh, dear, I'm so sorry we didn't all meet sooner," she cried. "We're off for Grenoble to-morrow."

"Where's Grenoble?"

"It's in the Alps."

"We'll come there!"

"Don't believe them for a moment, Miss Powell," threw in Suzette. "They've all solemnly promised to come up to Dinard and play with me."

"When *am* I going to see you, Di?"

"Can't you come over this evening?"

"Well, I'm booked for a party with *these*,"—he mutely indicated the Jesseys,—"but they won't mind if I break the engagement. They've seen me every day this week. I say, Mrs. Jessey, I'm awfully sorry, but I've got to ditch you this evening. It's my only chance to talk to my family."

"Lovely filial piety," smoothly commented the jilted

hostess. "Of course we can get a man to take your place, dear boy, but where shall we find one as attractive?"

He bowed, laughing and flustered.

"It's a dreadful shame, Cousin Edgar's hauling you away like this," he said in Diantha's private ear. "Every one of those fellows fell flat for you. We could give you a wonderful time. The Jesseys are corkers, but some of the other girls they drag along are pretty poor excuses. Don't you suppose you could stay over till the first of the week?"

"Oh, I wouldn't ask Cousin Edgar for the world. He's been such an angel,—and he's so tired, and he hates Paris so. You must just come to Grenoble."

"I'll do my darnedest to steer the bunch down there. Could we climb?"

"I'm not sure about that, but I know there's a public library."

Fan snorted. "I'd have stayed at Michigan and Randolph if that was all I was looking for," he made reply.

They dined that evening—Amy, Edgar, Diantha and Fanning—out-of-doors on the Champs Elysées, with lights among the trees, stringed instruments playing "*Un peu d'amour,*" and a continual stir in the air of city sounds, footsteps and laughing voices. Diantha moved in a mist of white chiffon, which Fanning had supplemented by a bouquet of gardenias and shell-pink roses.

Without communication, Amy and Edgar had observed that the susceptible heart of Fanning was again enkindled, and that Diantha seemed to be walking in a dream; and they had concurred in permitting the phenomena to proceed.

"She and her Jesseys!" Edgar muttered, gnawing at his cigar; but if the two young people had been paying attention, they might still have been ignorant of the identity of "She." The astute reader, however, will conclude that he was triumphing over his good sister-in-law.

With the advent of the salad, Fanning offered his cigarette-case to his cousin, and she rejected it with a blush. "Thank the Lord!" said he, taking a cigarette for himself, and snapping the case shut. He drew a candle near, and as the light struck upward across his face, Diantha thought him completely beautiful.

"Miss Jessey smokes, doesn't she?" she asked.

"She's a fiend. Of course everybody does over here. But it wouldn't suit you, Di."

"Tell me, do you like her awfully well?"

"Who, Suzette? Oh, she's as good fun as they make 'em; regular eye-opener to me, too. She's so nearly a foreigner that I can't make her out, and yet she's enough of an American so I can't help wanting to try. But I wouldn't call her a friend exactly. . . . You needn't be jealous of her, old lady!"

"Fan, you're unbearably vain! Who's been spoiling you? Do you flatter yourself I'd be jealous of you?"

"No, I don't believe you care about me one way or another. You're a little bit spoiled yourself, Di . . . just because all these silly Frenchmen make eyes at you."

"What Frenchmen?"

"It's only because you're blonde," he pursued brutally. "It's nothing personal. . . . I'd sort of like to go back to the Redgate summer—I could make you jealous there."

"You could make me care about you then; I'm inoculated now."

"That's true, darn it all. . . . If I'd known how much you could really mean to me—well, I was a fool, and I'm getting paid back."

He was leaning his chin on his knuckles and staring at the candle; she was looking at him.

"I suppose you simply despise me, don't you, Di?"

"How absurd! You take that whole affair too seriously. I've put it away at the very back of my mind."

"Then you haven't a prejudice against me?"

"You know I haven't an active one, or I wouldn't enjoy your society so much."

He knocked the ash slowly from his cigarette. "I have a feeling, Di," he said, turning his eyes to hers, "that some day you and I are going to start all over again."

VIII

During the train journey Diantha leaned in her corner by the window, paying little attention either to her fellow passengers or to the ribbon of landscape that reeled itself out beside her. The other travelers were German students off for the Alps with *rücksacks* over their shoulders, pheasant feathers coquettishly thrust into their hatbands, shoe-tips projecting like duck-bills beyond their sturdy feet, and jolly, unflinching blue eyes with which they inspected her for half-an-hour at a time. Their voices wove meaningless patterns across the foreground of her mind, while all the distance was washed by level waves of sadness.

Sun and cloud-shadow flew across the grain fields, hills rose and fell like musical phrases; villages snug in age-long neat sobriety struck clear color accents. Meanwhile the turning of the wheels beat like a pulse that measured her increasing distance from Paris and from Fan.

Let it be admitted: in twenty-four hours her child's love had flamed up anew, more intense with the growing of her nature, and by contrast with the experiences of this strange year.

Edgar Marriott was subtle, and he loved Diantha; so he forebore to banter her. Indeed, since the calamitous day when Eddie hewed down his statute by the swimming-pool, his father had trod with cat-like delicacy among the susceptibilities of his brood. He had a recollection which older people, formed in character, sometimes lose, of the devastating completeness with which a young soul is in-

vaded by new philosophies, new grief, new love; and he held it a sin to hint at the fluctuation of enthusiasm and the mutability of faith.

He had not been entirely pleased with his nephew's deportment. There was still a conquering tilt to his head, suggesting the matinée idol. One fancied he was accustomed to making love.

"I'll pull him up short if I catch him feeding his vanity at her expense," thought Edgar. But he was fond of Fan—of his generous, forthright personality, of his tantalizing possibilities. One must not forget, however assured might be his manner, that for Fan as for Diantha this was the formative and impressionable age.

Edgar had set up pawns in place of living, danger-risking, pain-suffering human beings on his chessboard; he enjoyed maneuvering them about.

Meanwhile Diantha in her nebulous way was reconstructing her new impressions of Fan, fitting them among the old,—trying to separate true from false, hesitating over glittering fragments too beautiful to trust and too precious to discard.

This much of the edifice was solid substance: his good looks, his generosity, his pleasure in her society; as also his regrettable penchant for earrings and flirtation. He had college laurels still about his brow,—youth's laurels, be it said,—records at pole-vaulting, membership in august clubs.

But whether the picture-puzzle would admit certain opaline scraps of yesterday evening,—there was the crux. He had not, indeed, expressed devotion, but he had looked it; he had incontinently thrown over the Jesseys for a chance of seeing her, and above all, taking the past into consideration, he must have been either sincere, or a passable bounder, to renew his love-making.

Was he a bounder? Her whole being revolted from that conclusion. Was he sincere? Incredible. . . . Perhaps, then, she had exaggerated the meaning of a few cant

phrases, which she conceded had a certain familiarity to her own ears.

But this verdict was impossible to sustain with the memory of his eyes every second more present to her. She demanded of them a despicable Nothing or an impossible All,—and All innocently imagined, as abstract as a dogma, as vital as a martyr's creed.

The day grew long and golden. They were tired; Amy half asleep, Edgar sunk, arms folded, in a reverie under the black angle of his eyebrows, even the ebullient strangers wearied into silence. Diantha was staring vacantly out of the window, across green plunging valleys toward the blue of the horizon, which floated indistinguishably into the transparence of the deep eastern sky. All at once her breath caught with surprise, as she saw, soaring high above the colors of earth in the luminous sapphire, the line of a snow peak shining like a fragment of the moon.

She had never seen a mountain challenging space in its bare splendor, but in some sense it was what she had always been waiting to see. There are the children of space and the children of height; for these the sea and the plains, for those the everlasting hills and the flight of birds. She had found a home for her thoughts.

IX

After a brief sojourn in a hotel, they established themselves under the roof of Madame Duret, who assumed complete charge of their physical welfare. The house was outside the limits of the town, heavily built of old stone, old plaster, and old oak beams, so thoroughly welded by time that they resisted alike the forces of decay and the beguilements of modern plumbing. Their rooms overlooked the garden, in which M. Duret, a retired merchant, passed his happiest hours with a trowel or a pruning shears; for the *pensionnaires* quickly discovered that Monsieur lived in awe of his wife. She had brought a *dot* some twenty-five years before, which had entered into his enterprises and had never come out again, at least in its original amplitude; and at a moment when his affairs were more than usually distressed, her father had obligingly passed away, leaving her the house they now inhabited. She had forthwith removed him with her other effects to the paternal roof, where she maintained an undisputed supremacy, and added to her revenues by entertaining a few selected boarders. For the present M. Marriott and Mme. and Mlle. "Poële" occupied what rooms she cared to spare.

Léonie, a healthy young person from the country, served their meals in the salon when the weather was gray, and on the balcony when it was fine; and they drank their coffee of a morning under the tolerant regard of the Alps.

To his own surprise, Edgar found it hard to drive his brain to work. He had always regarded himself as an energetic person incapacitated; but whether it was

his years of enforced unproductiveness, or some other cause lying in his own nervous system, he could not now turn out manuscript in any fixed quantity. The new broom at first swept clean; in three days and nights he wrote an enormous introduction to his monograph, "out of his own head," using ideas he had revolved for years on the renowned Jean Jacques. In another half a morning he elaborated a diagram of the rest of his book; and after that he was at a standstill, for lack of authorities. Certain works he had brought with him, but they were insufficient. Some could be consulted at the library, and Diantha could make excerpts; others again must be sent for to Paris, with such delay as the Lord willed. There was no use going further till he had assembled his material; and meanwhile he read memoirs of unimproving court life, and made notes for a research into the history of the salt tax.

Diantha, spurred alike by her mother's conscience and her own, improved her typewriter technique, and passed her mornings arranging Edgar's paragraphs on cards, which he later shuffled and dealt. Her faculties received in this work a far severer gymnastic than they had undergone at high-school, and she was often fatigued; but before ten days were out, she had begun to feel confidence in her own concentration.

Occasionally she fell to dreaming over her keys, especially after the letter that reached her from Paris, full of Fan's best compliments, and enclosing a snapshot of himself standing arm-in-arm with a laughing young girl in a rose-covered toque, on the terrace at St. Germain-en-Laye. "So you won't forget what I look like," ran the legend, "before you see me again, which will probably be soon."

During the July afternoons they drove and rambled through the valleys round about, and established their tea-basket beside brooks and little waterfalls. Amy grew fat, and amused herself by taking lessons in embroidery

from Mme. Duret, with whom she exchanged thoughts in a jargon which brought tears of laughter to both their eyes. She and Edgar, though harmonious, still had for each other a slight inward scorn, which prevented their intimacy, each thinking the other had made a gratuitous failure of his life.

They watched Diantha cunningly, but she gave no signs of which way the wind blew. There was expectancy in her eyes every time the post arrived or the door bell rang, every time she turned a corner.

Then one morning came a letter that spoiled the day,—postmarked Dinard, and a full twenty-four hours old. It took for granted that Fan meant to go out to the seashore all along; it described the "little horses" of the Casino and the bathing suits of the *plage;* it wished it could see Diantha, but in general terms, hoping it might run into her later.

"What's that young rapscallion up to at Dinard?" Cousin Edgar had asked, inspecting the handwriting and the postmark before giving it to her.

"I'll tell you when I've read it," she had replied, concealing a sinking of the heart.

But when she had slipped it back into its envelope, she walked out of the room, and neither Amy nor Edgar asked again for news of Fan.

After this the summer progressed more soberly, and the expectation that still leapt up wherever she saw a tall young man approaching knew itself for a self-cheating hope. The Marriott-Powell party made acquaintances,—a few staid French *bourgeois* presented by Mme. Duret, a few scholars burrowing at Edgar's side among the manuscripts of the library, two English girls with their governess who were improving their accent before finally putting their hair up, and who resembled young puppies in their friendliness and their artless sprawling attitudes;—no, the party was not lonely, but it was dull. So Diantha admitted to herself. In spite of Alps and

tea-baskets and the French tongue, the task of being secretary was as steady a grind in Grenoble as in Chicago. She conceived an aversion for the imperfect character of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and thought but little of his doctrines.

"I think we'd better motor over to Chambéry some day this week," said Edgar.

Diantha did not wish to motor to Chambéry, but she had no excuse worthy of offering, so to Chambéry they went, and from Chambéry they returned, Diantha in a fever all the while for fear Fan might have reached Grenoble and gone again, and secondarily because the sun and wind had burnt her nose till it peeled.

But when Mme. Duret welcomed them back, and replied to Di's questions that the mail was on the table, but that it had no importance, a yet more gloomy certainty succeeded the doubt—the certainty of being forgotten. The mail had indeed no importance; it contained nothing from Dinard.

So arrived the first of August. Tourists of every nationality flocked to the mountains, and by contrast the Marriott party aligned itself with the older inhabitants. Once or twice Diantha met in the streets or the park some friend from the steamer, who described at length the beauties of Italy, Holland or the Rhine, and made her crave a few idle weeks of wandering. But Edgar and her mother were obviously contented, and the book had begun to put on weight at last. The secretary's power over her typewriter had likewise increased with practice till, as she boasted to Cousin Edgar, she was almost as rapid as a very poor professional, and several per cent more correct. He for his part professed himself well satisfied.

And yet, since she was not only his secretary but his hobby, he regretted the dark circles under her eyes, and the ebbing of her rose flush.

One afternoon the library was so stiflingly hot that she

felt faint; so, putting her file of papers together under her arm, she made her way into the streets, and so down to the Jardin de Ville where she might be able to find a seat for a little while, look at the mountains, and perhaps feel a breath of air. Heavy heat hung over the valley; sounds fell dead on the humid atmosphere; there was no stir. The nearer mountains looked purple and swollen, the snow caps stood ironically aloof.

The park was full of people who had come to listen to the band, and Diantha attracted enough attention to have made her hesitate at another time; but there was an intensity of young unhappiness on her face which saved her from annoyance. She found a place on a bench near the river, looking to the north, and sat there, enduring her extreme loneliness as best she might. Beyond the city she could rest her eyes on the profiles of the Grande Chartreuse, and to her right soared the pinnacle of Mt. Blanc.

The air became more and more oppressive, stirring in gusts like the gasping of a sick beast. Matrons considerate of their hats glanced at the sky, and plucked their sticky offspring from the delights of the band concert, directing their footsteps toward home. The horns and trombones blared thickly, a girl laughed on a false note of hysteria, but the general chatter was subdued.

Diantha had not particularly noticed the passers-by who were scurrying homeward, but, when the band stopped in the middle of a selection, she glanced around and saw the drums and cornets disappearing into their cases, and the conductor struggling to get an ulster over his gold-braided purple uniform. From the south was rolling up a black thunder-cloud, sweeping along on an upper current of wind. Already half the valley was in shadow, and, as she looked, lightning snapped from the mass, and the thunder followed ominously close, roaring and tumbling against the mountain walls.

With a gasp, Diantha collected herself, and set off at

a run for home, up hill and down, glancing over her shoulder and watching for the first big drops on the cobble-stones.

There was a stretch of road between the town proper and Mme. Duret's house, with high stone walls and an occasional locked gate, and when she reached the beginning of this shelterless stretch she saw that the storm had outrun her; so she dodged into the shelter of a little *charcuterie* and there watched the rain descend in spatters, in gusts, then in solid torrents. Coolness came at last. The stout old gentleman who presided over the sausages and sardines expanded himself, and stood beside her in the doorway, puffing through his battered mustache "*épatant!*" "*foudroyant!*"

"Eh! behold a droll who approaches!" he exclaimed; and with the words a tall stranger broke through the wall of rain and burst into the shop,—a tall stranger?—no,—Fanning.

In high astonishment, Diantha collapsed against the counter. "Why—why——" she gasped.

"You ran like a rabbit, and you had a head-start," he said, removing his hat so that it might drain elsewhere than down his collar, and giving his shoulders a brisk shake, after which he looked thoroughly at home and at ease.

"You might tell me what you're doing here."

"I just had to come," said he. "I couldn't get you out of my head."

"That's nice," she replied happily. "Have you seen Mother and Cousin Edgar yet?"

"I've left my suitcase up at your old lady's."

"Were the family surprised?"

"They were out driving. Madame told me you'd be down at the library. She was very anxious to have me follow you down there, said you'd been expecting a *monsieur*."

"Why, I never told her any such thing."

"Whoever you were expecting, I'm glad it was me that came. My gosh, it's good to see you!"

The *charcutier*, surprised and intrigued by the odd customs of the Americans, retired to a dark recess in his shop, much as a naturalist hides behind a bush so that his subjects may fancy themselves unobserved. It was a pleasant shop, smelling of tangerines, goose-liver and cheese.

"How did you find me here?"

"Well, you weren't at the library, so I strolled around the town, and caught sight of you just as you loped out of the park. You were blocks away, and you did sprint!"

"Oh, Fan, I'd rather meet you this silly way than any other."

"Any way of meeting you's nice."

The *charcutier* wondered whether the young man's manner of hovering about the young lady indicated that he was going to embrace her, and redoubled his attention; but he did not do so. He looked very fatuous, and so indeed did she, as if the heavens had opened before her; but they did not so much as shake hands.

"The train was beastly," said Fanning. "Jammed, and late, and suffocating. You wouldn't believe that there was a woman who was afraid to have the window open, even to-day!"

"Where are all your friends, Fan?"

"At Dinard." And he scowled. "I'll tell you about that some time. I want to hear now what you've been up to, and how many Frenchmen have proposed to you, and what you think of me for not coming down here before."

Inconsequently they chattered, while the rain careered downward and set up cataracts in the gutters. She needed no cheating hope to tell her that this Fanning was different from any Fanning she had yet known. He was in earnest, and he had lost his cock-sure grin. He seemed to be trying to read her thoughts from her face.

At length there came pauses in the rainfall—last spatters, diminishing to the musical drip-drip of the eaves.

"Come out and see if there's a rainbow," said Fan.

"Wait a minute; *Monsieur, avez-vous de la confiture aux groseilles?*"

"*Malheureusement non, mademoiselle, mais j'en ai de très spéciale en framboise.*" And the stout *patron* emerged to dandle a white china jar, covered with a muslin cap, before her eyes. With such delicacies she was accustomed to piece out the bread-and-coffee breakfasts which still filled her American interior but sparely. So she bought the raspberry jam, and let Fan tuck her portfolio under his arm, and off they set down the high-walled lane. The air was as fresh as fruit, now, and the rainbow was faintly visible against the sky.

X

It was several days before Fan disclosed his motives for leaving Dinard. He had been flirting with Suzette, and she had been too clever for him. The story he told Diantha was not perfectly clear, but it involved himself and a rival, the scion of some proud race in the Southeast of Europe, and Suzette's dexterity in playing off one against the other. "By George, you can't help admiring her!" he exclaimed. "It's like sitting at the table with a perfect bridge-player who outclasses you completely. You hardly begrudge the tricks she takes away from you."

Fanning had learned from the private conversation of the rival that, though a victim to Suzette's fascinations, he had radically misinterpreted her manner, and in fact, attributed to her the code of the married woman of French fiction,—a branch of literature thoroughly familiar to him. The horror of this discovery, under the surface of polite gayety which Fan had been finding so smooth to his feet, had brought all his chivalry raging to the fore. He burned to protect Suzette, who was after all an American, and a lamb among wolves, from the consequences of her levity. He thundered at the Balkan hero, who seemed astonished, asked if he was being challenged, and, finding that thought remote from Fan's ingenuous brain, closed the interview by laughing with disagreeable suavity in his face.

Fan's next step was to remonstrate with Suzette and warn her; and this interview was the cause of his final disillusionment. "Not," he said slowly, "that I think she isn't straight; she's just disgustingly *knowing*." In

brief Suzette had smiled, called him "Parsifal," thanked him for his interest, assured him that she had no belief in the intentions of Slavic suitors, but that she found it amusing to outplay them at their own game. She had further intimated that although it was not impossible to bring these ravening wolves to the point of proposing honorable marriage, and that, in spite of a certain exiguity of dower impossible to conceal from their inquiring natures, she had nevertheless too good judgment to ruin her happiness by putting it into the hands of any such despicable amoralist; that her dream, in her deepest and sincerest heart, was of an American home and an American husband,—a loyal, straightforward, enthusiastic, hard-working American man;—if, she added with downcast eyes, Fate should find her worthy of this felicity.

For once Suzette had overplayed her hand. "If she'd pretended to be surprised and shocked, I'd have believed her, and I'd be dead in love with her this minute. I didn't realize that a girl could be so hard, and yet set up as a nice girl. French families don't let their daughters run loose that way, you know, and American men don't expect what foreigners do of girls like her. Her aunt ought to be put in jail for not looking after her; she must know better."

Leaving the Jessey villa, his head whirling with indignation, scorn and injured pride, he had gone off to keep an appointment at the tennis courts with Babcock; and following three furious sets, they had slaked their thirst among the tea-drinkers. There in a corner sat Suzette and her prince, their noses in close proximity over the tea-cups, and a series of excellent jokes passing between them, accompanied by peals of innocent laughter.

During a night and a morning tramp along the shore, he had debated schemes of revenge, conversion, oratorical persuasion, all without being quite able to leave her to her fate. "It does seem a shame for a girl as attractive as that to go to the dogs; and that's what will happen

to her if she keeps it up at this rate." He had had some thoughts of marrying her to reform her, but a saving sense of her superior dexterity had persuaded him that he could maintain no hold upon her.

Then a strange phenomenon had taken place. He was approaching a point of rocks, and the mist from before sunrise was just beginning to be threaded by rays of light and wind. Through one of these rifts he caught a glimpse of the highest rock, and on it Diantha was sitting, very sad, very pale, with her face turned away.

On hearing this, Diantha gasped, and felt as if a ghost had run its fingers down her spine.

"I began thinking about you, Di,"—he did not pretend he had thought much about her before, "and it seemed to me I *had* to see you. You were so fresh, and so wholesome, and so true . . . I felt as if I'd just missed being asphyxiated and my head was still swimming, and you were the fresh air. . . . I tore down and got the day train to Paris; left a note for Quinny; another note for Mrs. Jessey . . . and now I'm going to climb mountains, and go back to the really beautiful things. . . ."

During these days she and Fan were suspended between earth and sky, past and future. There was no love-making, in the old sense; their relations were more as they had been before the play at Redgate—he pouring out his thoughts and she counseling him and brooding over his troubles. She had no jealousy of Suzette, no conscious love for Fanning. She wanted nothing in the world except to go on typewriting, eating raspberries, and wandering down green valleys with Fan.

He on his part was full of new and sublime imaginings. Living the healthful, stupid life of the college man, he had to all appearance outgrown the day-dreams, in which he had led troops under raking fire to the relief of long-defended forts, or sold his life dearly in holding back, single-handed at the top of a staircase, some shrieking mob while women, children and the aged scurried to

safety behind him. But now the day-dreams reappeared in altered form. He spent hours smoking with Edgar, discussing, perhaps, the coöperative movement in industry; and as he was falling asleep at night he would see himself, in fancy, carried on the shoulders of cheering laborers, who were about to elect him their representative to something: or swaying Trade-Union meetings with his eloquence; or sitting at a mahogany table, explaining to a circle of gray-haired capitalists his unique success in the practical exploitation of the Golden Rule.

Even Edgar, who was at the bottom of these dreamings, was sometimes fatigued by the discussion of them; but Fan thirsted for high arguments.

Diantha was made the recipient of some of his visions, and was awed by their moral beauty. Since his seeing her on the rock, she had felt that his perceptions were unapproachably fine, and she reproved herself for not having earlier appreciated them. Furthermore, since he took it for granted that she was the standard of the lovely and the good, she came in some measure so to regard herself. They sat under pine trees watching the light on the peaks, and planned their new earth.

"It's hit Fan all at once," Edgar told himself. "True love, and public spirit." And he delighted his still-romantic soul by petting the new recruit. He could not resist, wisely or unwisely, a post-card to Daisy, assuring her of her son's presence and continued health.

"Can you believe that France is real?"

"No, it's just a picture-book." They had climbed, and the valley of the Isère spread beneath them as far as the town, which was indeed like the back-drop of an opera. Beech and chestnut branches overhung the ledge where they were lounging; the higher mountains had drawn near in the purity of the morning light. At the foot of the trees rocks lay splashed with sunlight, wearing a velvet skin of moss in the shade; and the grass was bedizened

with blue-bells. One could see smoke rising from chimneys down the valley; and in the silence one could hear tiny sounds of fly-wings in the air, or horse's hoofs on the distant roads.

Fan, pronouncing that France was a picture-book, propped his back against a rock, and sat, pipe in mouth, his knickerbockered legs outstretched before him, and his hands behind his head. He looked sometimes at the view and sometimes at Diantha, who had dropped among the blue-bells, fanning herself with her hat.

"I feel as if life couldn't be real in such a pretty place; as if I ought to go back where it was ugly, and make myself useful."

"You little Puritan! You work twice as hard as anybody else does here; Uncle Edgar drives you like a horse."

"Oh, no, Fan! I don't do one bit more than I enjoy doing. I'm as happy as can be now; I wasn't at first."

"Why weren't you, Di? Was it too hard for you?"

"I guess I was lonesome. You see I'd always been around with young people before."

"So you're glad I came."

"Of course, Fan."

"Well, I've got to be moving on soon. I had a letter from Mother this morning. She doesn't know I'm happily sitting on a rock at the foot of the Alps, but she cautioned me not to waste too much time and money at Dinard, and she reminded me that this was the only chance I'd have in years to see the sights of Europe. I've seen more of you than of any other sight in Europe, counting the times you were present and the times you weren't."

At once Diantha sank the full depth of her shaft. "I suppose you ought to go," she said, "but I shall miss you frightfully."

"It couldn't stay as wonderful as it has been," he said gently. "These ten days have meant more to me

than all the rest of my life. I see now just what I want to do. If I stayed here any longer with you and Cousin Edgar, it would be like hanging around in heaven when I was overdue on earth. But it's a part of me."

Fan had fallen into the way of idealizing Diantha.

"You'll be starting in at the Bank, I suppose, in the fall."

"Yes, licking stamps. But I'm going into politics, like Uncle Edgar, as soon as I get a foothold in the city."

"The country needs men like you," said Diantha, looking at him with limpid eyes.

"You'll be in Chicago, Di, and I'll talk everything over with you; and I count on you to keep me up to time—to remind me of the promises I'm making here, to myself and to you."

"And to the Alps."

"They don't care; they've seen too many little people come and go."

"You think they don't take notice; but how do you know what they say to each other on cold winter nights, under the stars?"

"They probably say 'Who sat on my blue-bells last August?' "

"I'm positive the blue-bells don't mind our sitting on them."

"What will you be up to?"

"In the autumn?"

"Yes."

"Cousin Edgar wants me to go on working for him, but I think I ought to find a place where I wouldn't be spoiled and pampered."

"Diantha! don't you think of getting another job. You mustn't go out into an office."

"And why not? Plenty of girls do."

"They're not like you."

"Oh, yes, they are, precisely, only probably nicer."

"They may be just as nice, but they're not tiny little frail things—like this." He held up one of the bluebells between his fingers, where the fine curve of the stem stood braced against the droop of the gem-like calices.

"It's an ordinary blue-bell," she said, her lip quivering.

"False modesty, Di. You must know you're one of the loveliest things in the world."

"I can't bear to have you talk like that."

"What are you afraid of? Do you suppose I don't mean it? Now, Di, darling Di, you mustn't let yourself think back to that summer at Redgate. I was as blind as a bat then, and I didn't appreciate you, and I deserved almost any unpleasant thing you might have said to me. But you know yourself, I've changed, this very summer. Haven't I?"

"Yes, I think you have."

"You'd better think so; it's you that did the changing. You know I love you now, Di, and you know it's because I see what you really are—honest, and fine, and faithful, and kind and sweet. You're the greatest lady I've ever known, through and through."

"No, no, Fan!" Her face was turned away from him, and her heart was passionately rejoicing that he should believe these absurdities.

"You're my saint, Di," said Fan. There was a silence, while he pulled at his pipe.

"We can't go any farther than that now," he said finally. "I'm not on my feet; I haven't anything to offer you. I'm not going to ask you whether you love me."

"You know I do," said Diantha unexpectedly, in an intense voice without any breath.

"Little angel, you love me a great deal in your own sparkling white, selfless way. You don't have to tell me that." There was another pause and he frowned slightly. He twisted himself about, to look squarely into her face.

"When I say 'love,'" he went on, "I don't mean what you mean. It's got a different string of ideas tied to it. I—I've kissed too many silly girls, Di."

"Oh, that!" she said scornfully.

"It's not as unimportant as you think. There's still another meaning to the word, that's bigger than either you or I have got at yet. We'll come to it if we hold on; but we'll have to take time. For one thing, I've got to forget a lot, before——"

"Before what?"

"Before I'll let myself kiss you."

"You can't imagine how little that means to me, when once I'm sure you do really care."

"You're nothing but a delicious greenhorn; but that doesn't prevent my 'really caring' about you."

So they talked while the sun bowled up and over the zenith, and down the sloping west; and the irrefragable proof of their love was that neither of them missed luncheon till four in the afternoon.

Two days later, after stimulating the Three by telegraph into a show of activity, Fanning set off for a rapid inspection of Milan, Florence, Rome, Venice and Munich, with such side excursions as might prove feasible. At the station Diantha put into his hand a small parcel, which he found contained a photograph in a carved wood frame, of the mountains behind Grenoble.

"No, I shan't forget," he said to it, just before the train plunged into the tunnel.

Edgar had been partially enlightened by his nephew. "I shouldn't precisely say we were engaged," said the boy, accurately, "but we are undoubtedly 'keeping company.'"

As matters had progressed no further, his uncle did not feel it necessary to put forward any inquiry as to the probable opinion of Fan's parents or Diantha's; he held his breath, metaphorically speaking, and crossed his

fingers, and wished that matters might be more irrevocably arranged before the return voyage.

Jean Jacques Rousseau suffered grave neglect thenceforward. On the one hand, Edgar's reading had led him into the contemporary mazes of the Internationale, which he found more interesting than the "*Contrat social*"; and he was doing some concentrated imagining of the results upon history of the success of the movement, with its ideals and its practical discrepancies, when it was once tried on the grand scale, as it was certain to be.

On the other hand, Diantha's zeal for research had sensibly abated. She seemed to find nourishment for her spirit by sitting in the back garden and gazing at the everlasting hills.

"After all," Edgar thought, watching her through the window, "I brought her over quite as much to nourish her spirit and fall in love, as to play on my typewriter. Plenty of girls could do that better than she does."

This nourishment, however, was not pure ambrosia. She was delightfully happy; the letters Fan wrote sent her into raptures. But she was neither such a child as he thought, nor such an angel. She had already experienced more realities than he, she had faced sickness, poverty, misfortune at home; she had earned her bread-and-butter for several months (even though the *confiture* and *framboises* came as largesse from Cousin Edgar). In fine, although she was a sentimentalist, Fan had been for once more high-flown than herself; and she missed him,—she missed being called a saint, she missed their long walks and high confidences, she missed their jokes; but more particularly, and with increasing poignancy, she missed the caresses he had so magnificently denied her.

XI

Fan's homeward passage had been taken for months, in the company of the shamefully neglected Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; and from Munich he wrote to Diantha that, according to Babcock, the Jesseys had been prevailed upon to take the same boat. "You know how that thrills me!" he added in parenthesis. Di was grieved that Suzette should be permitted the whole homeward voyage in Fan's company, while she was fated to dawdle across the Channel and sail from Liverpool six weeks later.

Cousin Edgar had benevolently consented to be in Paris during the week before Fan's sailing, and the four boys were due from Germany on the same day they came up from Grenoble.

Fanning and Diantha had one or two days to renew their lyric state, while Amy bought enameled powder-boxes and hat-pins in the Rue de Rivoli. Late one afternoon they drifted back to the hotel after a boat trip down the Seine, in their customary happy-go-lucky frame of mind, regardless of past and future, to be met by an unpredicted shock.

Throughout the summer Amy had been the most inconspicuous of the party. While she could not be called vivacious, she had shown flashes of gayety and continued periods of quiet happiness. It was her first vacation since her marriage from manual labor and harassing anxieties, and she had signalized it by putting on weight. Her eyes had not quite the tragic-Muse look which had given her face its distinction, but neither had her mouth the line of long-suffering. When one thought of her at

all, one was conscious that she must have been a rather charming young girl; but for the most part she held no one's active attention.

The shock, then, came when Amy met them at the door of the sitting-room, her arms full of shoes and tissue-paper, and thrust into Di's hand a cablegram:

"*Chicago, etc.*
"*When are you returning I need you Vesey.*"

"You see, Diantha, I was wrong ever to leave home," she commented.

The point was not arguable, her convictions being entrenched in the marrow of her bones.

"Edgar has gone around to the steamship offices to see if I can sail at once. It's a very bad time to get passage."

"Di, you and your mother can take our boat. Won't that be bully?"

"Easier said than done, Fan."

"I shan't have a moment's peace till we get started."

"Oh, come, Cousin Amy, if there was anything awful the matter, he'd have mentioned it."

"He wouldn't have cabled unless he was sick or in trouble."

It was hard to discuss Vesey Powell without treading on his wife's susceptibilities, and Fan preferred to go out on Edgar's trail, for the purpose of exhorting him to take passage, willy-nilly, on the "Kaiser Karl." Edgar was discovered in an attitude of perplexity, before one of Messrs. Thos. Cook & Sons' gratings, having just learned that not only was there no choice of accommodations, there was *no* space for another three weeks on any line,—all America having crossed the seas during June, being bent on traversing them, in the opposite sense, before the first of October.

"I shall go mad, Fan, if I have to be in Amy's com-

pany these next three weeks, while she's battling with her remorse."

"I wish I could give you my place, but I'm all tied up in a suite with the other three fellows; and I can't turn them out; two of them must be back when Law School opens."

"It infuriates me to have to upset all my plans for that vermin of a Vesey Powell! Why didn't he stay deserted?"

"Lord knows! I can't explain that man." Vesey rested lightly on Fan's shoulders, even though he was Diantha's father.

"Semthing may turn up at the last minute, you know," said the refined clerk, "but I mest say frankly it's unlikely. Twenty people are ahead of you, at that."

The impossible was not to be coerced into acquiescence; Amy was forced to postpone sailing toward her helpmate for another three weeks. The change of schedule was just enough to upset the trip to England, and leave them with time on their hands, which they proposed to kill as best as they might in Holland.

Fan, meanwhile, had met the Jesseys, and had invited them to dinner and the theater, asking also Edgar, Amy and Diantha, the three faithfuls, and a girl whom Devine had recently met and fallen in love with. It was set for his last evening in Paris.

Diantha dreaded the party. She lamented the parting from Fan, even for a few weeks; her mother's anxiety had played upon her for several days; and Fan's confidences had given her a deep distrust of Suzette Jessey. Possessing no new clothes, and no money to buy them, she appeared in the same white chiffon which had entered public life on the occasion of her first Paris dinner with Fan, but which had since that time seen service and lost its seraphic freshness, and over it her well-traveled polo-coat.

When the guests stood assembled in the lobby of the restaurant, her heart sank within her. Mrs. Jessey wore a glittering shell of purple sequins, with a train that clanked elegantly on the floor, a lorgnette and a dog-collar. Her white hair resembled some masterpiece of the *posticheur's* art in a show-window, and her face and shoulders had the waxen perfection of the *posticheur's* mannequin. Let it not be thought that Mrs. Jessey was overdressed; her slender and correct figure bore these varied splendors with the most sophisticated repose. One fancied she slept in her dog-collar.

The two girls were chattering to the young men, and made no move to include Diantha in their circle. Fan was doing the honors among his older guests, and she was left for a few moments to watch them.

Clara Beresford was an attenuated and aristocratic ash-blonde marvelously attired in dark-blue chiffon embroidered with gold, violet and crimson and dripping with dark fur. Her smile was a world-weary thing, suggestive of strange currents of feeling, and employed when least applicable to the subject in hand. Suzette was dressed with smashing simplicity in a tulle of a poisonous emerald green, untrimmed, and relying for effect on its color, its unflawed crispness, and a liberal display of Suzette's own person.

Before long, of course, Fan's friends had made Diantha welcome; but she would have given ten years off the far end of her life to have owned a cloth-of-gold gown and an ermine cape lined with vermilion.

The table-talk lay with the Dinard circle and touched lightly on this celebrity and that, generally titled. For some time they discussed whether Fifi had given the duke his *congé*, or whether she had ever had the chance; and apropos of this they told several anecdotes about Fifi's ludicrous parents.

"My dear!" said Miss Beresford, laying a long hand impressively on her partner's cuff, but addressing Suzette.

"That isn't Nijinski?" and she turned her ash-gray eyes toward a certain stranger a few tables away.

"Impossible! He must be in Russia . . ." but none the less they gazed and speculated on what He looked like without make-up. Mrs. Jessey maintained that she had met him face to face in that comparatively unclothed state. Diantha, unfortunately, had not seen the Russian ballet.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were the salvation of the party, for they liked Diantha and Mrs. Powell quite as well as the Jesseys, and they were vastly taken by Edgar, of whom Fan had given them romantic accounts. Fan himself was majestically ensconced between the two lady chaperons, and was not enjoying his dinner to the full. About twice during every course he and Diantha exchanged a prolonged look, which gave them strength to go on.

At the play she found herself sitting between Devine and Babcock, who bombarded her, after each laugh of the audience. "What did the fellow say that time? Did you get it?" Now Diantha's French had improved, but it was not perfect; and, moreover, when she did understand, she did not always wish to translate. Here Suzette shone. She leaned across, and sent a stream of rapid interpretations down the line, casting light, without crudeness, on the proceedings. Her paraphrases were marvels of quick wit, both as to what she dared to say and what she suppressed; and Di's French was at least good enough to appreciate them.

Suzette had a delightful smile, tomboyish without being in the least innocent. One enjoyed provoking it.

Between the acts she asked Fan bluntly: "Is that your best-beloved?"

"She's certainly among the first ten," he answered placidly.

"You must tell me all about her. Not here; on the boat."

Fan thought to himself that they should probably talk

about something besides Diantha on the boat. He did not want Suzette to touch that topic.

The play over, he so arranged matters that the Jesseys and Miss Beresford were escorted home by the other young men, while he assigned himself the duty of returning his relatives to their hotel. When the strangers had disappeared, he thrust Edgar and Amy into a taxi, and bade them godspeed. "Diantha and I," he said, "will walk."

"Don't be long," protested Amy, as they drove off.

They were not long—not very long; but for an hour they did wander through the glory of the night. White walls in the moonlight looked as if cut from the very substance of the moon, with velvet shadows profoundly marking their angles. The sky shimmered, a green-blue immensity, behind.

"It's almost like the mountains," Fan whispered.

"It's not a bit like the mountains, but it's just as beautiful, and I'll never forget it."

What they said to each other was not original, but they felt it as a reality in the wavering moonlit world. What they meant was that they had made a very beautiful beginning, and that they hoped infinitely.

Leaning on the parapet of the bridge that crosses from the Place de la Concorde to the Quai d'Orsay, they heard the river rippling in a mist beneath their feet.

"Fan!"

"Darling?"

"Do you imagine God knows how happy we are together?"

"Very likely."

"I hope He does; He'd enjoy it."

". . . I'm glad that stupid party is over. That sort of people come between us."

"Did you feel it too? I was quite lonesome."

"I'd rather be alone with you on a rock up above Grenoble."

"Well, we have to live in the world."

They were silent—the thought saddened them.

"We'd better go back," said Di.

"I'm afraid to let you go."

"You mustn't be afraid, Fan; you needn't. . . . All the same, I'm afraid too."

They stood hand in hand, tiny under the vastness of the sky.

"Do you know what I wish, more than anything in the world?"

"What?"

The silence was prolonged.

"What is it? Tell me, Di; I might be able to get it for you."

Without quite knowing what she did, she slipped her arms up around his neck, and Fan's scruples blew away like smoke.

"Do you know," she said, "we're in the very middle of the Place de la Concorde and it's as light as day?"

"Who cares? There's nobody going by but a few nuts in taxicabs."

"I don't care in the least; it's just rather funny."

So they set off down the Rue de Rivoli for the hotel. It was somber under the arcade, and sadness fell upon them,—a sadness too vast and elemental, one would have said, to have had its origin in their inconclusive kiss.

XII

"The same old town!" said Edgar. He was not displeased to be rolling through the miles of backyards by way of which the returning Chicagoan must approach his city. He was looking forward to his own house, his own books, his own maid-servant Rhoda and his own son Eddie; to his own gold-fish, remote descendants of those who had enchanted Di's twelve-year-old eyes; his electric, his family portraits, his old slippers. It would be a long time before he went world-wandering again, especially as his purposes in regard to Diantha had been so well furthered by this trip.

And with what relief and joy would he not resign Amy on her own doorstep on Hickory Place, to the affectionate Vesey! She had been not less trying than he had anticipated during the interval before she reached home.

As for Amy, she neither knew nor cared whether she was inconvenient to her cousin; her place was by Vesey's side, and the only motions of which she had approved for the last month had been those which forwarded her progress. She had been often impatient, especially when after the departure of the "Boadicea" she had heard that it sailed with two empty cabins. If Edgar had made the effort he might have discovered those cabins. But Edgar, after all, was a divorced man,—that is, a man who had not done his duty by his wife,—and she could hardly expect him to rise above himself in assisting a woman to do her duty by her husband.

So, unfortunately, the two cousins had returned to their postures of superiority toward each other; and the equilibrium of the traveling trio was thereby disturbed.

As for Diantha, she was staring out of the window, but not seeing the garbage-cans and washing; her eyes were fixed prophetically on the station-platform where Fan would meet her.

She was off the train as soon as the porter had the steps down, and stood dazed in the crowd. For a moment she saw no one; then with cries and tramplings, Herby bore down upon her, followed by Mat; and he was flanked by her father, grotesquely stout and prosperous-looking. Over the shoulder of Herby's embrace she saw Fan looking for her,—his square shoulders, his brown face glancing anxiously right and left; and detaching herself from her brother she rushed to him and flung her hands into his.

The family divided itself perforce between two taxis, and Edgar made it easy for Fan and Di to ride home with him in his before returning to the North Side. So before long they were alone together; and Diantha noted happily that the traffic was sufficiently blocked to give them a long talk.

"Di, there's hell to pay," he said. "I'm almost crazy."

At once her intuition, which had been numbed by the excitement of arrival, awoke, and she perceived that he was in fact a different boy from the one who had left her in Paris. He was nervous, and there was a sullen look on his face.

"Tell me," she breathed.

"Everything's wrong, Di,—inside and out."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Did you know the Jesseys are visiting at our house?"

Her heart sank. "No," she said.

"You may hear almost anywhere that Suzette and I are engaged,—everybody thinks so. *But don't you believe it.*"

"Why, Fan? In the first place, how did she get out here?"

"Oh, you know, Mother is perfectly crazy about Mrs.

Jessey, and she invited her last spring; and somehow Suzette just came along. I *hate* that girl."

"I don't see what difference she makes one way or the other."

"Don't you? Well, she has the knack of bothering me almost to death. I can't get away from her; I can't keep her out of my head."

"Do you *have* to see her?"

Diantha darted a frightened glance at the corner of his face—brow, eyelid, lash and cheek-bone,—which looked somehow alien to her.

"I have to be civil while she's in the house; and then she makes me fight her, and then she flirts with me, and then she turns humble and pathetic. . . . I see through her perfectly; I despise her tricks, Di, and she knows it; and yet——"

"And yet you're interested?" Di's voice shook.

"You can't understand that, can you? You're not built that way. I assure you,—I give you my solemn word,—it doesn't even touch the way I feel about you. I always know you are the very sweetest person in the world, and I—really, Di, you don't know how I adore you; but when Suzette says 'Snip' it's the most natural thing in the world for me to come back with 'Snap'—do you see?"

"Not exactly."

"You're not a flirt, Di. Neither am I, really; but the surface of me is. Go a little way down, and you'll find I don't think about anybody but you."

"Then why should you think I care whether you squabble with Suzette?"

"It's not just squabble," he said uncomfortably.

"Fan! You don't mean you——"

"Not yet, but she's trying to make me and I've wanted to, like the devil! . . . Sometimes I think I might as well kiss her and get it over with. . . . It's the silliest game in the world."

"I don't quite understand the point," said Di, feeling very desolate.

"You wouldn't in a million years. There's no point worth understanding; it's something like getting a dog to walk on its hind legs. . . . But you *must* understand this much, Di; the reason I'm telling you all this at the very start is *not* to make you think I'm fond of Suzette, for I'm not, one bit; it's to prove I'm really in love with you; and if you hear anything to the contrary, you're to tell yourself people are mistaken. Suzette's the kind of girl who's always being discovered in dark corners with you, looking very sociable; and she doesn't mind a bit having people think we're engaged."

"She must be a perfect fiend."

"No," said Fan thoughtfully; "she has good points. You and she are in different classes, that's all. Now mind, I don't want to make love to her, and I don't intend to be trapped into doing it; and you mustn't believe anything about me unless I tell you myself."

There was an interval, before Diantha said soberly: "Fan, you know you're quite at liberty to make love to Suzette or anybody else; we're not engaged; you don't have to explain your conduct to me."

"Dearest Di, listen. This episode will either make or break us. If I can handle myself now in a way that is perfectly loyal to you, I won't be afraid to ask you to marry me. (There can't be many people in the world more distracting than Suzette, he thought parenthetically.) If I can't, if I'm not strong enough, I've no right to marry you, because I'd make you unhappy. We're as different as can be, you and I, Di: part of me, and the best part, understands you; another part understands Suzette."

"Then what do I do—just wait till you find out?" Her tone was faintly indignant.

After a pause he replied. "I can't think of anything better. . . . It was so simple up at Grenoble," he pur-

sued, "sort of artificially simple. I was way above myself, and I thought I'd never come down. But the fellow you'd have to live with wouldn't be that stained-glass cherub you knew in the Alps."

"Fan, what's the use of your keeping on saying you care about me? You don't, not really. You want a lot of freedom and a lot of adventure; and your caring for me stands in the way of all that."

"You *are* mad, aren't you? I'm terribly sorry; I was afraid you wouldn't understand. Now listen, my darling Di, and believe me:—and don't laugh: there is a higher me and a lower me, and you needn't think I want the lower one to come out on top. I realize that all the good in me is tied up with you. If I marry you I'll progress, and I'll do some good in the world—just as we planned, you remember. Otherwise I shan't amount to three copper cents, and when I die all I'll leave behind is golf trophies. Now don't you see I want to fight myself for you? You mean to me, not only yourself, Di, but what Cousin Edgar wants,—unselfishness, and high principles and all that."

"If I could only help you, Fan, instead of just sitting around while you do the fighting!"

"I wouldn't let you lower yourself by standing up to Suzette. And she'd lick you six ways at once on her own ground. No, darling, don't you try to *lure* me away from Suzette; just let me see you and talk to you, and I'll forget all about her; and by George, she'll have to go home *some* time; she can't visit us all winter."

XIII

After telling Diantha that things were wrong "inside and out," Fan had amplified his own internal combats, and passed over, by way of sparing her feelings, those of his difficulties which originated with his mother.

Daisy Marriott had not lacked informants as to her son's infatuation. Edgar's vainglorious post-card from Grenoble had roused suspicions, as had certain phrases in Fan's letters. Then when the Jesseys landed, there had been perfect agreement between aunt and niece that their duty lay in Chicago. I would not intimate that Cora Jessey and Suzette were so crude as to discuss strategy; but why relinquish an eligible, a peculiarly eligible suitor, after a week's intimacy on the steamer, when they had already an invitation to visit at his home? The Jesseys were agreed to concentrate their campaign.

One wonders whether Cora Jessey thought of herself as a predatory fox in a chicken yard, and her old friend Daisy Marriott as a blind and benevolent hen. If so, she was much deceived; for in reality she was a vagrant lured for reasons of policy into the den of a mother fox whose every hair was a-bristle with the instinct of danger. Not for a moment did Daisy intend Fan to marry Suzette; she was to be used and discarded, perhaps given an opportunity to woo some even richer Chicagoan, perhaps set adrift; Daisy had no compunctions. But she was not averse to a little information as to what had actually taken place abroad, nor to the promulgation of a little gossip regarding her boy and Suzette, as a counter-irritant to any stories that might be at large relating to Diantha; nor even to a little expert flirtation.

During these October days Daisy had the constant feeling that she was playing for high stakes, and must show no excitement. She had heard Fan asking his father for a half-day off, to meet the travelers, and had tried to prevent the arrangement; but Tolman did not begrudge the time to his heir. In minute ways she had shown Fan her disapproval of his latest love. She considered whether the hour was yet ripe for opening her heart to her husband, but recalling his fondness for Amy, she held her peace. Now that Diantha was at home, the situation was bound to develop.

In one respect she erred; she thought the pair formally engaged, and expected upon Di's arrival a proclamation of the fact. But when none was forthcoming, she found her nerve too unsteady for a waiting game, and chose to force the issue.

The party returned on a Thursday; Friday evening Fan broke a theater engagement to spend the evening on Hickory Place, and Daisy chose the same evening to unburden herself to Tolman.

Tolman's jaws worked uneasily, and he scowled a good deal; but he was not properly enraged. "More than likely there is nothing in it," he said. "Puppy love; miles from an engagement. Just because Cora tells you it's true doesn't make it true; you've had experience of that sort of thing. Why, good Lord! You might say I was in love with Amy, in a way, when I was a young chap; boys always fall in love with their pretty cousins; but it never amounted to anything, and we never expected it would. Don't let's worry them, or they'll take it seriously."

"Then you *don't* approve of the idea any more than I do?"

"You haven't explained to me just how hard you disapprove," he answered, looking quizzically at the lighted end of his cigar, "and I imagine I'm not as wrought up as you are; but certainly, nice as Diantha is, she's not just the wife I'd pick for my boy."

"A thousand times no!"

"Diantha's a lady, even if she's not very large caliber; but her relations are pretty awful. That rapscallion Mat; and Vesey—! Daisy, you can't picture to yourself till you see that fellow, how disgusting he looks when he's fat. It's a revelation!"

"How much does he owe you?"

"Oh, very little. He came in to-day with a certified check for two thousand, and that all but squares him. I didn't ask where he got it. But I took a look at him, and once is plenty."

"No one," said Daisy, rising, "could have been as nice to that family as you have been." And she kissed him good-night to indicate the termination of the interview.

"Don't flatter me; Edgar's given them as much money, one way or another, as I have, and twice the time and personal interest. Of course he *has* the time to give, and I haven't."

His wife left him to the latter half of his cigar.

On Saturday, Daisy had planned that Fan was to come home in time for luncheon, and go with the Jesseys and a party to a football game at the University. During the morning he called up to tell his mother that he had got two extra seats, and was bringing Mat and Diantha.

"Oh, what a nuisance! There won't be room in the machine or at the table, and it will separate us all in the grandstand."

"I'll drive Di down——"

"Suzette expects to go in your car."

"Well, I've asked Di, so I guess that settles it," he said and hung up. He was no stranger to Daisy's moods, and had known for days how she disliked Diantha.

He and his mother were very fond of each other, and she influenced him subconsciously by the intense feeling she directed upon all his affairs.

Di came accordingly to luncheon, and watched with eyes and ears for what might be passing between Suzette

and Fan. Midway of the meal, Tolman walked into the room, and stood with his feet apart, pulling off his motoring-gloves and favoring the party with a black scowl.

"Daisy," he said, "you were right. I want to talk to you before you go."

"We ought to leave soon," she murmured, glancing at the watch on her wrist. "Let's step into the other room now."

"I want a word with Fan, too. Can't you send the others on, and let him drive you up a little later?"

"Certainly," she said and turned back to her guests with the disciplined brightness that hostesses learn in the course of years.

The Marriotts had a habit of disregarding their music-room, their library, and their drawing-room, and sitting wedged into a cranny near the foot of the stairs, known as the "telephone hole," and furnished chiefly with an old sofa, the telephone table, one straight chair, and an etching in the style of 1882, inscribed "*Le vieux soldat.*" In this retreat, after the party had been painlessly dispatched, Tolman, Daisy and Fanning assembled, and Tolman shut the door.

"Fan," he said abruptly, "how much is there between you and Diantha?"

"A good deal, sir."

"Are you engaged?"

"No, sir."

"I don't want you to play into her hands. Do you hear?"

"I don't follow you." (Fan was standing at attention, stiff and tense, and his mother was watching his face with adoring eyes.)

"I'm seldom angry. I've never been angry at Diantha before."

"What's annoyed you, father? My falling in love with her?"

"Rubbish! You fall in love every three weeks. No,

I'm angry at the plot they're trying to involve you in."

"You'd better tell me what plot. Diantha couldn't be in a plot if she tried; it's ridiculous."

"I learned this morning," said Tolman, slowly but with vehemence, "that Vesey Powell is going around Chicago bolstering up his credit by stating that his daughter is going to marry you; and the two thousand he paid me the other day was borrowed on the strength of that statement."

"Why—why—" stammered Fan. "But we're *not* engaged."

"The man that told me said Powell shows letters written from abroad by Amy and Diantha, to corroborate his tale."

"Di never wrote that, I'm sure."

"I shouldn't think Amy would either. Are you sure you're perfectly frank in saying you're not engaged? Can they—have you given them reason to think you're bound?"

"I never discussed it with Cousin Amy. Diantha knew I was going to ask her to marry me as soon as I felt I was in a position to."

"She has taken a good deal for granted, then, in her letters."

"She had a perfect right to," said Fan loyally.

"You think she had a right to give her father the information to use in his business, before you'd so much as mentioned it to your mother and me?"

"I'm pretty sure she didn't do it, sir; and I'm positive she didn't mean to."

"A fine, clean man of business you've picked for a father-in-law!" said Tolman. "Fan, it's perfectly unthinkable! You'll ruin your whole life if you go on with this. He'll drag you through the dirt, and you'll be helpless against him."

"Oh, he's not that bad, Father! He doesn't do things on purpose."

"On purpose! On purpose? I suppose you think he didn't move to Chicago six or seven years ago, and settle down at our kitchen door, for this very purpose,—to be as close to us as possible, and work us for every cent he could, and climb on our shoulders instead of standing on his own legs? That man's as crooked as a pretzel, Fan, and this baiting his trap with Diantha is his pet scheme!"

"I'd like to see those letters, Father."

"I haven't got them, my boy, and I won't ask Vesey to let me look at them; but I don't see what difference it makes. Whether they're authentic or not, they show you what you're marrying into."

"Fan isn't even considering marriage yet, Tolman," breathed Daisy, consolingly; "he says so himself."

"He's considered it enough to talk about it and let other people talk about it," said his father. "I want him to consider it a whole lot more before he goes ahead. I don't say, one way or the other, that Diantha's to blame; just as likely she knows nothing about it; but as sure as you marry Diantha you marry her father; and he's not the bashful, shrinking type."

"I can hardly answer you in a minute," said poor Fan. "Perhaps she and I could go off somewhere. You can't ask me to give her up; she's the best thing in my life, the very highest. No, you couldn't expect that."

"Why, Fan," said his mother, "you know you're always falling in love. Only last week it was Suzette. I have eyes,—don't think I'm blind. You may think this feeling of yours is permanent, but I know better. I prophesy you won't marry for years yet."

"Suzette!" he said, and shuddered. "Would you rather I married her?"

"Dear boy, at least Cora Jessey is a more presentable 'in-law' than Vesey, or Mat, or Herby."

"I'm *not* marrying them!"

"In a very real sense you are."

"Fan!" Tolman interrupted. "You can think this out

yourself; if it was any friend of yours whose case you were considering, you'd see it in a flash. You *can't* live away from here. Your family, your position, your logical future are here in Chicago. Your place is half-made for you already; and if you talk about doing good, —God knows I want you to do good;—you can't do any growing except where your roots are. Now you take time to this and look at all sides of it. You've got to consider what your mother says, that you've always been fickle about your love affairs. That's one point. Then I want you to go over your whole business career, point by point, as far as you can see it, and estimate just how often Vesey Powell will throw a monkey-wrench into the machinery at the very moment when you ought to be able to count on a father-in-law for help. You must size up Diantha, whether or not she's square about this;— I mean, you've got to think how much influence her family can bring to bear on you through her. I don't ask you to decide anything, I just ask you to come to some conclusions, and then tell me what they are."

Daisy gave her husband a look, warning him to say no more.

"If you'll lend me your roadster, Fan," he said, "I'll drive your mother out to the game. You stay here where you can be alone."

XIV

Eddie had been in Alaska beyond reach of the telegraph, and when two or three days after his father's return he walked into the Michigan Avenue house, he expected to live among holland furniture-covers and dine under the eye of Joshua and Lucinda. To his amazement the rugs were down and the portières up.

"Dad!" he shouted incredulously.

"Ahoy there!" answered a voice from above; and he bounded upstairs into his father's room, where Edgar stood nonchalantly beside the hearth. They met delightedly, and eyed each other up and down.

"Tired but healthy," was Eddie's verdict. "You've come back into the world of men for keeps."

"You're the same ugly old fellow," Edgar said, shaking his son affectionately by means of an arm laid across his shoulders. "You ought to have come with us and got a little Continental polish."

"I thought I'd be a nuisance. I—I wanted Di to have a good crack at——"

"So that was it! Why, Eddie, you've never been so very forth-putting before that you distracted Di's attention from her good-looking beaux."

"Well, everybody changes, and so do I. I've got past the point where I can be around where Di is, and keep still."

"I'm afraid you haven't much of a chance, old man."

"Happy ending, eh? Well, I suppose that's what I wanted."

But all the same his head sank a trifle, and he plunged his hands to the remotest depths of his pockets.

He had not grown handsome with advancing years, though he was tanned and vigorous after his summer. To the end of Eddie's days some of his joints would be unduly heavy and others unnecessarily loose; and the suit yet remained to be made which should quite conform to his proportions. His neck was long, his jaw large and deep; his eyebrows bristled straight across his face. And he was self-conscious about his ugliness, some ironic spirit having decreed that he should be the victim of a sculptor's craving for form and symmetry.

But after the summer's separation Edgar could see in him new development of spirit, new force. He had always been remarkable for tenacity, and for dogged pursuit of his own lines; but now one had an impression that he had passed through the five-finger exercises and begun to feel his instrument. He was losing his repression—perhaps his power of repression. Never before had he spoken to his father of his cult of Diantha.

"You perplex me," said Edgar. "Like the rest of my ducklings, you are outgrowing me." It was later; they had dined, talked out their current bulletins; the goldfish were mouthing and sweeping with extreme languor across the last rays of daylight that filtered into their tank.

"You accept the changes?"

"I accept all God's gifts."

"I used to walk; now I run. Or say I used to swim with those pumped-up things, now I float."

"You used to be tongue-tied; now you chatter about your soul."

"Not chatter!" said Eddie, hurt, perceptibly withdrawing into himself.

"You seem," said his father, slowly, "to have tasted of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."

"If you call it that," said Eddie, without dropping his eyes, "perhaps I have. I have admitted a lot of things to myself. I have seen what people are, in the rough."

"The analogy fails, however; with our first parents, knowledge was succeeded by shame."

"I live in a more sophisticated age than our first parents. . . . That apple wasn't entirely evil, you know; it taught them to understand goodness, too. . . ."

"Tell me about Fan and Di."

"Easier asked than answered," said Edgar; however, he described the events of the summer.

"Wait till you see her; she's exquisite. Victory perches on her banners; and it enhances her complexion."

"So I suppose," said Eddie dryly.

The next morning, nevertheless, when in the middle of breakfast Diantha walked in upon them, her complexion was not remarkable for brilliancy.

"Cousin Edgar, I've been lonesome without you," she began; then she saw Eddie, and interrupted herself to welcome him, with an unpoetic hug. Obviously he hampered her further confidences; but he permitted himself fifteen minutes of her company none the less. He must look at her, and perhaps guess, if she would not tell him, just why she looked less radiant than his father had described her, and why perhaps the sacrifice of his summer had not borne perfect fruit.

"Have some grapes."

"Thank you." She pushed her veil up over the end of her nose, and stood beside the table with a cluster in her hand, discarding the empty skins on Eddie's butter-plate. "How are you getting on without your secretary?"

"What! are you back looking for work already? That wasn't your attitude in Grenoble."

"This house is a cloister I like to flee to," she said, looking at the far-from-monastic Victorian elegance of her surroundings.

"Do you want to escape the world, Di?" asked Eddie. "I supposed it looked pretty good to you."

"I get tired,"

"I wish you were more of a fighter," said Edgar, with meaning.

"Thank the Lord she's not!" cried his son. "There are plenty of bull-necked huskies in this town already."

"Fan thinks I'm no good in a fight."

"Everybody thinks so, because it's true," Edgar answered. "I don't say but what you're a pleasanter little secretary as you are; but you do need somebody to stand between you and the crush. Come, tell us the North Side news."

"All my family are well," said Diantha. "They seem to have got on splendidly without us. Herby has had a raise, and bought a second-hand Ford for a hundred and sixty dollars; I think he means to keep it in the parlor when winter sets in, but at present he leaves it standing under a tree out in front of the house. He says nobody will steal it, and he seems to be right, for nobody has, so far."

"Herby's an odd offshoot, isn't he?"

"Why odd?"

"Because he's so far removed from all oddity. He's a composite photograph of a healthy young American."

"I hope all young America's as solid nutriment as Herby is," Eddie put in.

"Mat," resumed Diantha, "did the polite and graceful when we arrived home, but he's off again now; he has what he calls a studio apartment down near the river. I think it's just a room."

"Is he married?"

"Not that he's mentioned. He's dying to see you, Eddie; he says the 'Rag' is going stale for lack of red blood."

"I'll stop in at the office this morning."

"Have you seen all Tolman's gang?" asked Edgar.

"Most of them. Josie's amazingly good-looking this fall. Christine has another baby, you know. I was over

at Cousin Tolman's for luncheon Saturday, and we went out to the football game."

"Did Fan drive that rangy roadster he missed so in Europe?"

"Fan wasn't along."

"Oh," said Edgar. There ensued a marked pause.

"You know," said Diantha, "the Jesseys are visiting Cousin Daisy."

"Aha! Was he sparking the lovely Suzette?"

"No, she was on our party. I don't know where Fan went. I—I haven't seen him since."

It was then Tuesday morning. A second pause occurred, and Eddie saw, until he looked away, that her lip was trembling.

"Probably Tolman sent him out of town on business."

"I wonder if he did. He came in during lunch Saturday and said he wanted to speak to Fan and to Cousin Daisy."

"Very likely that's it," said Edgar, thinking very likely it was not. "Rhoda! Tell Cornelius I shall want the electric at ten."

"I ought to go," said Di.

"Can't you let Hickory Place run itself twenty minutes without you?"

"I want to be at home."

"Rubbish! if he telephones, it will do him good to find you out and have to call again; and if he stops in, he can wait. I'll drive you as far as downtown when I start; I'm going over to the bank to speak to Tolman about some business."

"Cousin Edgar!" said Di, with a start. "Don't speak to him about *me*, will you?"

"Do you think you're the only topic I discuss with my brother?"

She smiled at him, and dropped the subject. Plainly she was no fighter.

"Sit and talk to me," said Eddie, "while Dad feeds his creatures upstairs."

"I must get them to know me again," murmured Edgar, retiring from the room. (He stoutly maintained that his approach drew forth an expression of intelligence and affection on the bulbous features of his fish.)

Eddie had thought about Diantha all summer under pines and rocks and Northern Lights, and had assured himself that he was going to hold the mastery in his further dealings with her. If she was engaged to Fan, well and good; if not, he was going to make love to her "instead of treating her like an ikon"; and with half a globe between them, he had felt an amazing confidence in his power to win her and hold her.

Now here she sat before him, piling sugar lumps into little cottages on the table-cloth; and whether she was engaged or free, happy or unhappy, she was still as far removed from him as Kamchatka. In her presence, he was again the prey of his worship, his breathlessness and wonder. Di must be happy! and Fan must make her happy! even though he, Eddie, were driven to break a way to his brain through his recreant skull. He must look out for her, "stand between her and the crush"—but who was he to think of bothering her with his love?

"How are your sculps, Eddie?" she was asking.

"I gave myself a vacation, so as to grow up to my technique."

"Had you too much technique? I shouldn't have said that was your trouble."

"I'm learning to see things as they are."

"Dear Eddie, you'll never do that if you live to be a thousand."

"You think so? Perhaps you'll let me put it this way then:—I'd been seeing things more complex than reality; now I'm reacting to see them more simple."

"You must beware," she said, quoting Fan, "of artificial simplicity."

"Di, was your trip a success?"

"Oh, Eddie, such a beautiful success! A dream . . . Home is a little—a little bit flat after it."

"You thought the dream would go on."

"The dream does go on," she answered, stoutly, "but not the strangeness. There's a sort of usuality about Hickory Place."

"We carry our own universe around on our backs, you know."

"That sounds well, Eddie, and you'd better put it in the 'Rag.' But Chicago is the well-worn center of my universe, and the Alps are the glorious horizon, that you touch perhaps once, and then look back to, forever . . . you see them towering behind you, with the sun in their eyes . . ."

"You could probably write nicer poetry than Mat does."

"Oh, no. When I tell you about the Alps, I speak out of the very middle of my heart, because I want you to see something with me; I couldn't talk to the whole external world, as one does in poems."

"My child, you are growing up."

"I'm pretty nearly twenty."

"I'm just as near twenty-one; twenty's nothing."

"If my conversation is growing up, it comes from living with your father. He is the most inspiring man in the world to me."

"Spiritually I think you're more his daughter than I'm his son. He's found you ductile and yet responsive, and human without being unreasonable . . ."

"Eddie, he simply adores you."

"Of course he does, and I adore him; but I don't give him nearly the fun molding my character that you do . . . I just go my own way, and announce it to him afterward."

"I wonder if I've changed much under his fingers? What would I have been like if I'd grown up without knowing him?"

"You mean, how much of you is *you?*"

"Yes, and how much is Hickory Place, and Mother *and* Father——"

"How *is* your Father?" he asked, noting a swift contraction of feature as she mentioned him.

"He's splendid; weighs a hundred and ninety; you'd laugh if you saw him. He's enchanted to have Mother back." One gathered that Amy had deserted Vesey; this was the Hickory Place convention. "There's one awful thing, though. You know he used to play the violin when he was young? Well, he took it up again this summer while he was alone, and one can hardly sit in the house while he's practising. He says he knows just as well as we do when he's off, but Mat and I think that's a mistake, because if it sounded the way to him it does to us, he couldn't possibly keep on doing it."

"Are you going to work for Dad this winter?"

"I'm not sure. Don't tell him, but I think I'll try for an office job downtown. I'd like the experience."

"No, Di!" said Eddie, very loud.

"Every man in this family is determined I shan't go into an office. What's the matter with offices?"

"Nothing at all, except that you're so fragile, and you can't look out for your own interests."

"Then I deserve to be snowed under," said Diantha, rather bitterly.

"Nonsense! It's a matter of suitability. People don't use sponge-cake for paving-stones."

"Well, we shall see. I may be a great deal solider than you suspect. I've got just as much Plymouth Rock in my system as you have, good cousin."

"Bosh! You're an individual, and I'm an individual, and our heredity has nothing to do with us. Look at you and your parents; look at me and my parents; look at Herby, look at Mat;—same ancestors as you exactly. They never deal the same hand twice."

"Then you mean I could have been the same Diantha

Powell if my father had been a Finn and my mother a Patagonian?"

"You can't prove that you wouldn't have had the very same soul put into you."

"I wonder," said Diantha.

XV

Tuesday passed, and Wednesday morning. Twenty times Diantha had gone to the telephone to call Fan, but her courage had failed her. She had spent several sleepless nights, tormented by jealousy; she had endured the deepening oppression of four days of silence. The summer's color and fire had left her; she was all weariness.

On Wednesday afternoon she and Amy were in their sitting-room, darning a gross or so of Vesey's socks which had accumulated during the interregnum, when she caught sight of Fan coming up the steps. Giddy with the revulsion of feeling, she found him holding her hand, saw him sitting down between her and her mother, and playing with the blue celluloid darning-egg.

"Did you think I'd been run over by the street cars?" he asked. She gave him a smile.

"I've been frightfully busy," he said. He looked tired and upset.

Amy was pondering the most graceful way to get out of the room with her baggage-train, when a key rattled in the latch, and the father of the family bustled into his domicile. He was whistling as he appeared in the doorway.

"Aha!" he cried. (His new corpulence made him resemble a mature, sleek mandarin of doubtful probity.) "What's this I've been hearing, Fan? Amy! didn't you ever learn 'two's company, three's a crowd'? We ought to have two parlors. Come on out in the kitchen and tell me the news."

He propelled Amy and her darning-basket through the door; but before closing it he darted back to wring Fan's

hand, with, "Seriously, dear boy, I'm delighted. I've watched you grow up, and you're as worthy of her as anyone could be."

Diantha saw that her father was creating a painful impression, but she was used to that, and she did not know why Fan was white-lipped.

"Does he think we're engaged?" Fan asked, whirling on Diantha when they were alone.

"Apparently."

"*Did you tell him so?*"

"Fan, don't you know Father? He's always living in some house of cards. I didn't suppose he knew anything about us; but obviously he's not only heard things, but he's jumped at conclusions."

"I've been pretty nearly crazy." Fan was tramping up and down the tiny room, falling over footstools and tangling his feet in stray socks.

He had come prepared to tell her that his father disliked hers, and to urge her to begin life with him in some other city. To bring himself to this point he had visualized a thoroughly unbalanced group portrait of the Powell family, with Di showing pinkly in the center of the canvas, and Vesey obscured in the background.

But now, face to face with reality, this composition had altered. He saw Di divested of her cream-satin and pearls, a drab child in a room quaint, cluttered, slightly dingy. What illumination there was, Vesey had arrogated to himself, and any picture which focussed around him was bound to lack charm. One doubted whether mere distance could separate the enraptured Vesey from a son-in-law.

Fan did, in effect, see himself for a moment as his father had advised—through the eyes of some impersonal friend; and he saw himself absurdly allied to a clan of Impossibles. It will be remembered that the boy had never been brought face to face with necessity, that fortune had smiled on him through school and college, and

that his standards were quite naturally the standards of his class—unbelievably narrow and unreal. The facing of a complicated situation was one sport for which he had never been coached.

At the instant Vesey shut the door, Fan knew that he was not going to propose to Diantha, and his only craving was to spare her what pain he could. Di loved him, certainly, but not as he had loved—not as he did love—her; so he thought. He must shield her sensitiveness in regard to her father, he must not hurt her in any way,—the darling, drooping little thing.

"I've worried about you," said Diantha. Her lips were so dry she had difficulty in speaking.

"What will you say, darling, if I tell you it's no go?" He sat down and took both her hands, which trembled, as did his.

"Suzette?" he whispered.

"As much Suzette as anything. I couldn't make you happy."

"Oh, Fan!" she said. "Anything but that!"

He wished he had told her the real reason. Suzette had not crossed his mind since Saturday, and as a matter of fact she and her aunt were about to leave for happier hunting-grounds. But he was half-committed to the story, and it seemed the better of the two.

"I'm not worth bothering with."

"I'm—sorry—you don't love me." As she spoke, she could not prevent two tears from starting down her cheeks.

"You're the only girl I can ever love!" he said.

"Then you're talking nonsense," she answered drearily.

"I suppose so. I wish I could explain everything to you, but it wouldn't be any use."

"Then we'd better say good-by, Fan."

"I don't wonder you feel that way," he said. Never had he wanted to kiss her as much as at that moment.

He thought if he had to go away without convincing her that he loved her with his whole heart, he could not face his life. And yet in the tumult of his feelings, some last gleam of fairness kept him aloof.

"You're well rid of me. When we're both sixty years old, perhaps we can talk about this; I couldn't bear it any sooner. You'll think about me, and I'll think about you. Now there are two things you must believe, when I tell them to you; and you must *always* believe them. Will you?"

She nodded, her eyes in his.

"One is this: we could never have been happy together. I know that, because I know myself and you both. And the other is this: you may think I'm as crazy as a loon;—but I love you now, and I've loved you every minute since Redgate, and I expect I'll love you as long as I have any memory."

"Do go away."

He rose and walked to the door, where he stood looking at her for some time, unable to force himself to go.

"I wish we could run like lightning out of all this!" he muttered savagely.

"It would be very silly. You don't love me. You don't want to marry me. Nothing could be sillier."

All at once he lost his resolution. Striding back to her, he demanded in a very low voice, "You think I don't love you?"

"I know you don't," she said, and then found herself standing, with his arms around her.

"Perhaps we're both a little bit crazy," she suggested, wiping her eyes on his handkerchief. "Now you'd better go along," and she gave a tiny laugh which frightened him.

Eventually he did go. It was the most garbled of partings. They were never to see each other again—and yet perhaps they were; he loved her,—she could not

help believing that,—and yet Suzette had managed to come between them; there was no solution possible—yet one might be found; nothing was clear to Diantha.

After an interview with his father, Fanning left that night for the Kansas City office, where he passed the least enviable of winters, hating himself, hating his father and mother and Diantha's, hating the Jesseys, rebelling against circumstances and yet more and more certain that under the same conditions he could not have acted otherwise; writing notes to Diantha and tearing them up; throwing Suzette's occasional screeds into the scrap basket, and then answering them out of a sense of the injustice he had done her in Diantha's eyes.

At the core of his unhappiness lay the admission that he, who was used to considering himself a leader and a man of initiative, had lost control of events. He had been allowed the artificially restricted freedom of a chessman, free to swagger and ruffle his crest just in so far as he preserved an immutable tradition—two squares west and one square north, or for variety, two squares north and one west.

Nothing in "track" or crew or clubs had taught him the science of cutting Gordian knots. He knew some one might have had strength, resolution, enough to carry Diantha off and break relations with her bugbear parent. He was not man enough to put through such an enterprise.

No, he had been Daisy's and Tolman's chessman,—perhaps Edgar's too; and they had maneuvered him out of harm's way. He had even some sentiment of gratitude for his rescue; but with it much humiliation.

Sore and baffled, disliking his own conduct, he withdrew his mind as far as possible from Suzette and Diantha alike,—from the whole sordid tangle. The very fact that his extreme range of idealism had been touched during the days at Grenoble, made the unfulfilment more bitter. The experience had poisoned his mind, made it several degrees

more cynical and less receptive to fine impressions. His healthy young organism labored subconsciously to throw off the virus which was alien to him; and as months elapsed, he did regain his poise, and learned to look back without over-emphasis, if without poetry, on the events of the autumn.

XVI

On Hickory Place, meanwhile, there was less potent anodyne for memory. A winter passed which could only be called hideous to Diantha; and for once the reasons were subjective. Amy was well after her trip, Vesey brought home money, and with Herby and Mat both earning their living, they could afford a maid-of-all-work, and offer Diantha a "winter at home."

It would have been far better for her had she been forced to earn her living. The ineluctable recurrence of nine o'clock in the morning would have precluded in a measure the vigils and brooding to which she gave herself over.

Except for the strained situation between the Marriotts and the Powells, Daisy might have given Diantha some unpretentious coming-out party, and thrown her among new acquaintances; but silence reigned unbroken between the two houses from Thanksgiving to Christmas, and thence into the spring. She was in no mood to seek untried friends, and all those whom she valued had come to her through the Marriott connection. Her snobbishness at school had not yet been forgiven, and when by chance she encountered classmates, even though she might secretly feel wistful, her reserve settled over her like ice, and she drew curt greetings without sequels.

Her father, of course, was discursive on the analogy between her character and her mother's, in their common inability to clinch a deal; for no one on Hickory Place doubted that Fanning had jilted Diantha rather than she him; her countenance was a walking indictment of his infidelity. To hear Vesey orate on a conclusive, satis-

factory love-scene as pictured by his imagination, was but doubtful consolation. He likewise took delight, perhaps not consciously malign, in practising on his violin the well-known folk-song:

> "Forsaken, forsaken, forsaken am I,
> Like a stone by the wayside neglected I lie."

and of all the assaults upon her nerves this was perhaps the shrewdest.

It is to be borne in mind that she had never been given as clear a view as had Fan of their rupture. The only explanation he had offered was a mysterious phrase or two about Suzette, which were not to preclude her believing he still loved her devotedly. She did so believe; continued to believe it with an immediacy such as Fan, in his contact with the exterior world, could not maintain. She lived half in ecstatic dreams of reconciliation, in which "everything" was explained, by one means or another. Fan little knew how much Di would have forgiven in the way of peccadilloes and philanderings, and how poor an excuse he had lit upon for the severing of diplomatic relations. The longer they remained apart, the more simply she saw him, the more believingly recalled what he had said to her about her eyes and her soul and their future.

Some beautiful event must come to pass!

So she thought; and yet as days became months, with no word from him, the reality of loneliness forced itself upon her. She revolved plans for approaching him, but they were dream plans; she, unlike her lover, had had no training in initiative, and any hint of reality was overlaid with the listlessness of misery. It was not possible to her, especially after the blow to her pride and the subsequent drubbing of her father and her family on the same bruised spot, to be more than a passive sufferer. The meek Amy, herself, would not in her young days have let her happiness slide without a braver tussle to hold it.

The fortunes of the "Red Rag" varied, but not for their permanent betterment. After Christmas Mat found it convenient to give up his studio and live at home again; and he and Diantha had many little bouts over his magazine. She professed scorn for it. "It's Laodicean," she told him. He purpled with fury. His good, radical magazine neither hot nor cold? . . . Red-hot, he thought.

"Yes," said Diantha, turning the leaves of the latest issue, "but it contradicts itself, and weakens its own effect."

"You confuse author and editor, like all greenhorns."

"Like the public, you mean. The 'Rag' has always been an entity and spoken with one voice;—in several languages;—but it's had one point of view, and that's been its strength. Now it talks differently out of two sides of its face."

"Show me."

"Here's this editorial on the New Matrimony. Bigoted, but arresting. Then there's an article, making fun of those very theories——"

"Making fun?—how?"

"Oh, very slyly. Perhaps you haven't read it carefully; if you glanced hastily at the article you might overlook the irony."

"Let me see," said Mat, taking the paper from her, and running an eye over Claudine Chesbro's latest. The truth was that he had sent her (she was now visiting outside of Baltimore) the editorial before publication, and she had returned with it the very article of which Diantha was speaking, as a bolster to his argument. Either she was not writing ironically, or she had hit his prejudices and susceptibilities so exact a tap that he had thought the blow came from Truth's own hammer.

Which?—Mat scattered his lank fair hair with his hands, and strove to study impersonally the writing in question. He would not gratify Diantha by asking her

further to justify her criticism, but he tried to detach himself and read with the eye of the public;—to discover whether to the lay mind Claudine rang true or not.

It need not perhaps be said that Claudine's sincerity was to Mat a question of exaggerated importance. During her Chicago stay she had honored him with more of her friendship than she was able or willing later to withdraw; she had let him plumb her soul in his analysis of witcheries, and had certainly, at times, taken the boy seriously, crudities notwithstanding. He told her, and she believed, that she had done him good; indubitably she had cut new facets in the prism through which he regarded the world. His foremost vanity was the belief that he understood Claudine; and this confidence was not unfounded, being upheld by intuitions whose justice she had been forced, with surprise, to admit.

Herby had now passed his eighteenth birthday, and was earning $110 a month. No one could call him brilliant, nor was his aspect distinguished; but he was clever with his hands and with the mechanical part of his brain; his heart was kind and his character honest. If Amy had been capable, like Claudine, of irony, she might have laughed to see this son she had brought into the world, who embodied with so little grace her thirst for respectability and reliability. Herby was reliable to a fault; he was even respectable, but the respectability was of the sort which sheltered itself behind utter nullity.

He had something of Fanning's physique, broadened and toughened; he had much of Fanning's coloring. But a more stolid expression one seldom sees on a human countenance; its frankness was fairly bovine. His wide mouth habitually smiled a little. He had taken to washing his face and hands again, and to brushing his rough tawny hair. His gait was the loose, capable stride of a good workman.

Since his family had ceased trying to make a gentleman out of him, his sullenness and wildness had disap-

peared. The day when he told them of his ambitions had been the breaking of a dam, and now that his mechanical tendencies had free course, his disposition ran as even as a canal. He fell without resistance into the habits of speech of his associates, and lost in a measure the precision of New England accent which the rest of the Powells retained. In fact, he showed no impress of any particular heredity; certainly one would not have taken him for the descendant of Puritan lawyers and divines, and Colonial governors.

At seven o'clock of an evening the room which Mat and Herby shared was an anomaly. Herby would be rolling down the sleeves of his flannel shirt following a last struggle with the patina of black grease on his forearm, while Mat wriggled to see in the low mirror the success of his white tie. Mat went out to dinner a great deal, and in his evening clothes he was acquiring a certain bizarre elegance.

He never brought his literary friends to the house, preferring when he entertained to eat garlic at restaurants; but he did, rarely, take Diantha out to cheer her up. These parties were regarded by himself and his colleagues as duties rather than pleasures, and it must be admitted that Di made little effort to please.

She struck them as formal and dull, when as a matter of fact, apathy and distaste were all that prevented her from giving them back some of their own conversational coin; she had not frequented Edgar's society for nothing. But her ideal was distinct before her mind, and since it represented a young gentleman of the most Apollo-like beauty, and of consummate good breeding, Mat's friends struck her as inferior.

Edgar Marriott was not as large a part of her life as heretofore. Constraint lay between them, because of the subject which had never been talked out satisfactorily; and Edgar was, to tell the truth, almost as disgusted with Diantha as with Fan.

"Something is lacking in the girl," he said to Eddie. "She has no *push*." For he too was assured that the rift had not been of Diantha's making. "I can't do everything," he continued. "I sacrificed myself all summer to throw them together. She had the situation in her own hands, if she'd used ordinary human intelligence. Suzette Jessey, forsooth! Fan has sense enough to set the right value on a minx of her type. There's more to it than Suzette."

"Fan never did have eyes to see," replied Eddie, whose sympathies were all on the side of his unresourceful cousin. "But he's punishing himself."

"He's punishing her. She's so wispy and droopy, it makes me uncomfortable to look at her. And I can't talk to her for fear of treading on her feelings. She's pre-Victorian,—something like Fanny Burney's young ladies. You expect her to weep or faint any moment."

"She's intensely feminine," said Eddie.

The word 'feminine' to Edgar connoted some of his wife's qualities, the cruelty, the provocative charm; so, disappointing as Diantha had been, he was hardly willing to apply the derogatory adjective. "I shouldn't call her *feminine* so much as *feeble*," he protested.

"Diantha's not feeble, Dad!" exclaimed his son, in outraged tones. "I grant you she's ethereal, and she doesn't know how to handle herself in this brutal, stupid world; but she has strength the way a growing plant has, or a running stream."

"Have it your own way, my child. You think I'm cross at Diantha because I'm not fond of her; but it's because I'm *too* fond, and I had my heart set on that match."

"Did you ever consider the desirability of her marrying *me*?" asked Eddie, hoarsely and uncomfortably.

"Dear boy, I never knew till this fall that you cared about her."

"Well, what do you think about it now?"

"She certainly wouldn't have you at present, Eddie. Whether she ever will I can't say. I'm going to keep my hands off, anyway; I'm tired of playing God Almighty."

It was during this winter that Eddie, whose art had always a propagandist quality, modeled the statuette dear to feminists, which young Luty Herron, Christine Marriott's son, christened "A Gentleman Stepping on a Lady." It was cast, and exhibited at an art-gallery, and was photographed and reproduced far and wide; for in 1913 Woman's Suffrage was a live issue. Eddie persuaded Diantha to go in with him one day to look at it.

He told her its name, and she laughed. The Lady was a fragile person who had been picking flowers and was still holding them.

"It's as interesting as can be," she said, after walking around it several times, with a countenance devoid of expression, "but honestly, Eddie, do you believe gentlemen do step on ladies? You wrong your sex."

"Bless your heart!" thought Eddie to himself. "Don't you know when you've been stepped on? Or is it bravado?"

He concluded it was the latter.

On a certain winter evening Josie made one of a party which had strolled, in pale velvet wraps and the corresponding masculine trappings, to a movie, between dinner and a late dance. As they were drifting homeward down Division Street, making merry and causing considerable comment from the passers-by, a saloon door swung open, and three young men came out, two in sweaters and one in a suit. They were perfectly sober, but just cheerful enough to find subject for amusing comment in the Gold-Coast party which was confronting them. The girls drew slightly together, their escorts imperceptibly closed around them.

All at once a frank and natural voice was heard to exclaim: "Why, it's Josie! Hello, there."

The stripling at Josie's side was about to leap forward in protest, when she caught his arm.

"Hello, Herby!" she answered. "How's the family?" and the two groups moved in their respective directions.

"Who's your friend?" asked a facetious youth in front of her.

"He's not a friend," said Josie, dryly, "he's a blood-relation."

The moment was felt, by all concerned, to be embarrassing. All, that is, but Herby, who as he passed on informed his friends that his cousin seemed to be looking healthy, but that he had never liked her very well.

In due course Edgar's monograph was lopped of its excrescences, recast as a magazine article, and accepted; and in March he summoned Diantha to read the proof for him and verify the quotations. It was a brief task, but it gave her thoughts new material, besides reviving memories of Grenoble.

"I think I must get a job," she said, during an interruption due to her making tea for Edgar and Eddie.

"You'd better come back and work for me. If I had a secretary again I might be goaded into writing another article—a whole series of articles."

"Thanks, I'm after real work this time; no tea-parties."

"Diantha's right," put in Eddie, unexpectedly. "This sort of family job isn't what she needs."

Diantha, though grateful for his support of her position, wondered if Eddie was another person who had not approved her conduct. She knew well enough that Edgar was disappointed,—though how to have done better was an art in which he had never instructed her.

While they were talking discursively of shorthand and

its uses, a commotion was heard in the hall, a step on the stairs, and to the horror of everyone, Fanning suddenly entered the room.

"Back for the week-end, Uncle Edgar!" he shouted; then the briefest of seconds elapsed before he continued, "How bully to run into you, Diantha! I was just going to call you up."

"How's everything, Fan?" she answered. The two Edgars, watching her seriously, applauded her composure. She did not know that every drop of blood had left her face, so that the veins showed blue against dead-white.

"Oh, everything's slick now I'm home. I've been bored stiff all winter. Three lumps and lemon, please."

"I know," she said.

"Are you going back again?" asked Edgar.

"A month more, and then Father's going to take me into the office here. Golly, Chicago looks good! And what do you think? Mother's worked a two weeks' holiday out of Dad for me, between jobs. She says I'm exhausted. She and I are going down to White Sulphur. Pretty smooth, don't you say?"

Fan was talking rapidly to cover his discomfiture, and was deeply conscious of Diantha,—deeply, and yet not dreadfully. He was getting through better than he had expected . . .

Listening to intonations and almost to pulse beats, Edgar knew that the elements of reconciliation were not abroad. He rightly diagnosed his nephew as convalescent, and unlikely to relapse. And when Diantha, less intuitive than he for the moment, began artlessly adjusting her plans to have Fanning take her home, Edgar was anxious to spare her a definite humiliation.

"You said you'd drive over with me," he told her. It was true. "I have to go to Lucy Gregg's to tea anyway. Why don't you let me take you both back?"

"Oh, Cousin Edgar!" thought Diantha, reproachfully.

She expected Fan to offer to drive her home in spite of him. But Fan's car, it appeared, was in Kansas City; he had come over in the family limousine, which had gone back; and he was most grateful for a lift from his uncle.

On the return trip he made it clear that from that moment—Friday afternoon—to Sunday evening, his mother had made engagements for him for every instant; so he might not see either of them again; but it was *great* to catch this glimpse . . . And as he escorted Diantha from the electric to her own door, he said cordially, "Next time I'm home, we must certainly have a party. Don't you get all dated up!"

A whiff of boiled cabbage greeted them as she stepped inside. He returned to his uncle's electric, shaking himself like a collie.

Edgar, with a surreptitious eye upon him, thought that perhaps Diantha had not lost any incalculable treasure in losing him; but since she was foolish enough to want him, he would willingly have spanked the boy for his recalcitrancy.

XVII

The events of the rest of that spring are soon chronicled. At the end of six weeks, just before the return of Daisy, Josie and Fan from White Sulphur, a note came for Di in Fan's adored hand. The hope that continued to flicker on her altar blazed up in one last gust as she saw the envelope.

"Dearest Di,"—it ran,—

"I don't want you to hear this from anybody but me, and I want you to know it right away. I am engaged to Chloe Dunbar from New York. She is such a wonder . . ." etc.

"Besides being so happy on account of me and Chloe, I am delighted because now you and I can be friends again. That was a big mistake we made last summer. It was beautiful, and I know you wouldn't have missed it any more than I would; but we can both see by now how unsuited we were to each other—in *that* way. We were meant to be friends; you've been more of a sister to me than any of my own sisters; and from this time on we'll *be* friends. I've told Chloe all about you, and she wants to meet you. She's coming on to Chicago soon to visit us, and it will be announced then. We think we'll get married in June or July.

"I'm fairly nutty, I'm so happy. I enclose a snap-shot —isn't she a peach? Do write her one of your bully letters.

"One thing's sure—she'll be able to keep me out of mischief. No Suzettes these days, I can tell you! I have to stand around.

"Let me give you some advice, dear old Di. You go and

get engaged as fast as you possibly can to *the right fellow*. You'll know the minute you set eyes on him. That's how it was with Chloe and me. There's nothing like it!

"Tell your family, if you're sure they won't pass it on.

"With love,

"Fan."

In due course Chloe met all Chicago, and all Chicago approved the match. She was eminently suitable, big, good-looking and well-bred, with simple manners and an excellent education; keen about out-of-door life; friendly without effusiveness. Chicago meant to like her.

Daisy Marriott was as happy as a three-year-old. God had rewarded her faith. She had not meddled nor interfered this time;—it was a love-match from the first day in the swimming pool. The heir-apparent had been saved from a morganatic marriage and was espousing his equal; for Chloe had money, she had beauty, she had health and spirits, she had distinguished relatives, she was an aristocrat through and through.

In spite of heavy going, Chloe and Diantha persisted in trying to get acquainted. Chloe made a last effort when she asked Diantha to be one of her ten bridesmaids. After Diantha had declined, on the plea that she could not leave the position Cousin Edgar had recently obtained for her, the bride postponed, with a relieved sigh, the impossible task of making a bosom friend of her husband's first love.

Fanning beamed upon the two of them,—again like a collie. They did their best to gratify him; but Diantha would not deceive herself; she knew that she and Fanning could never be friends again.

XVIII

Di was not the only person who found fault with the "Red Rag." Its old subscribers took to writing angry letters and withdrawing their subscriptions; also the office received an unusual proportion of articles which their authors considered suited to its needs, and which proved to be manifestations of the Newer Decadence.

"We've always been frank," said Ames to Eddie, "but even I have never advocated Smut for Smut's sake! What's the matter with these people?"

Eddie held for the "Rag" the feeling which loyal college men have for their alma mater. But even he could not help mourning a little for "the old days," and he lay awake of nights planning how best to recoup the magazine's lost moral eminence.

Material difficulties were likewise to be faced. The previous year the staff had considered it wise to buy a share in a printing establishment, and had borrowed the money from well-disposed plutocrats; the debt was to be amortized out of the saving in operation. Inexplicably, however, the saving failed to materialize; and Ames, Eddie and Garrity were uncertain whether to lay the blame on legitimate advances in cost of production, or on some looseness in the management. Mat was of their counsels, but they could not make him take the situation seriously. So long as the interest on the loan was paid he would not worry over the principal. "Every business carries a certain debt," he would say. "We're as sound as a bank. Don't be penny wise."

Edgar, with whom Eddie discussed some of these points, and who had an intimate interest in the loan,

heard with a sinking heart these words of a true-born son of F. Vesey Powell.

"You might tell him," said Edgar, "that banks have tangible assets. You borrowed money without security at the start, you know; and your debt is fairly top-heavy by now."

"It's that damned Claudine," Ames concluded. The conservatism natural to editors was settling upon him, and he could have done with less of what he crudely termed her "putrid iridescence." At the next staff meeting he advocated dropping her from the list of contributors, and was met by Mat's resignation. Had it not been for Eddie, the "Red Rag" would have split then and there, but he was roused to eloquence; he recalled to them their hopes, their responsibilities, and their achievements, he played on their loyalty. The breach was healed; Claudine was limited and censored, but not abolished; and for several months the feeling throughout the office was almost that of the halcyon days.

Eddie saw a great deal of the Powells that next winter, and occasionally his father regretted having thrown them so closely together; he feared Mat's influence on his boy. But Eddie had grown into a man, and knew his mind; and he adhered to both Mat and Diantha.

With regard to Mat, one could hardly call Eddie all disciple or all guardian. It was Mat's quicker brain which had first formulated the manifestoes of the "Rag," and Eddie owed him his social creed; but the principles Mat laid down half by conviction and half by flair, had rooted deeper in Eddie's nature than in his own, so that now Eddie found himself often in a position to confirm Mat's shallower faith, and hold him up to his convictions. The dogged fidelity Eddie felt toward his beliefs linked him to Mat, therefore, in two distinct relationships.

As to Di, the situation was simpler. Following Fan's marriage, he had gone back to his old attitude of consecration. He concurred in his father's judgment that

Diantha would not have anything to do with him—that she was not in a state to bear love-making from anyone. All his feeling was fused in an immense pity and tenderness, and he gave himself without effort to making her existence a little more varied and tolerable. He took her about, introduced her to people, tried his best to make his friends attentive to her, by way of spreading balm upon her self-respect. She leaned upon him in return, made him certain half-confidences, and trusted him absolutely.

One Sunday afternoon they were walking home from a concert. Their way led them through a twilight feathery with falling snow.

"My mistake," said Diantha, "was in hurling myself at his head."

"Di, you're absurd. The reason Dad was mad at you was because you didn't hurl yourself hard enough."

"You don't know. I very distinctly made advances to him."

Eddie laughed. "I'd like to see you making what you'd call advances."

"You may take my word for it," said Diantha with dignity. "On a bridge in Paris. My weapon should have been passivity."

"I wish you'd stop mulling over what's past and over. It's downright indecent, now he's married—and most happily married," he added with intentional harshness. "If anything ever was foreordained it was you and Fan separating. He's forgotten all about you."

She walked along without speaking, and he felt compunction. "Di!" he cried.

"Everybody has gone back on me,—and now you too!" she exclaimed,—"Fan, and all his family, and Father and Cousin Edgar. Go away—just go away and leave me alone. There's no reason for me to live—there isn't a person in the world that really cares about me.

"Do you think," she went on, "I'd humiliate myself thinking over and over again about Fan, if I did matter in the least to anybody at present? I'm just an extra person."

"Di, Di!" Incredible that she should believe it,—that she should not know how large a place she filled in his life, or his father's!

"When I've thought about you every minute for the last five years!" he said aloud. He had decided he had something to give her after all.

"I don't want to bother you if you'd rather not be bothered," he said, "but if you feel that way I want to tell you it's unjust to all of us. We do care about you."

"Oh, I know," said Diantha, relenting quickly, "you and Cousin Edgar have been wonderful, and I couldn't have got on without you."

"You mustn't think it's charity or pity."

"I don't, truly. I take back what I said; I was just tired."

"But you did believe it, or you couldn't have said it. Di, do you mind my telling you that you've been a little bit stupid about that?"

"About what specially?"

"Well, about me."

"No, no, Eddie. You know how I've depended on you."

"You've been blind all these years to how I felt. Why do you suppose I dog your footsteps as I do?"

"Why . . ."

"You've taken me for granted. You've never seen that from the minute I set eyes on you, on Grandfather's front steps, you've been more to me than you ever were to Fan."

"Oh, how could I have guessed that?"

"I've poured out my heart to you and worshiped you . . ."

"Don't say things like that to me."

"Not if they're true? Di, I don't want to hurt you —I'd rather kill myself than hurt you—but if I thought I could make you care about me the way you did about Fan, I'd never give you a moment's peace."

Diantha was amazed beyond measure.

"You've been perfectly darling, Eddie," she said, "And I'm glad you didn't let me guess about it till now. I'm a little bit sorry I know, because now things won't be the same between *us* either."

He took this without surprise as his answer, and set himself to reassure her.

"I wouldn't have told you if I thought you'd be so silly as that. Things will be just the same. I don't ask anything of you except just to see you. I didn't think you could give me any more than that."

"It doesn't seem exactly fair, Eddie."

"I'm the judge of that. . . . Perhaps you're sorry I said what I did."

"I'm sorry you feel that way and I don't."

But after all, she was not only sorry but glad.

PART IV

I

Notes by Edgar Marriott

Redgate, June, 1914.

I used to think I could spend my declining years out here; but there is a staleness coming over the place. It is admitted that urban existence overdevelops the nerves and atrophies the soul, but I have a more personal distaste for this particular spot than such generalization will account for.

It is the monument of my credulities. When Naomi and I built here, we believed in wide sunset horizons, solitude, and our immortal souls. To-day, since my forebears have bred into my marrow an unshakable assumption of that permanence, my peevish brain justifies it not by any dignity in us, worthy of perpetuation, but by my feeling that if God can pity as I can pity, He must regret the cases of arrested development He sees clustered about His footstool: they are not, so far, a workmanlike job.

I do not admit that we are unperfectible. There is still a remnant in me of my second growth of credulities, which sprouted around my young flock. The first summer I had them out here, it seemed to me that they had every chance of growing into a super-race. Few and small hurdles stood in their way, instead of the direct barriers that blocked my father, for instance, or to less extent myself. Those details were under my

control,—so I thought. A little weeding out, a little pruning and grafting,—so Burbank builds a new flower. Creation is not a closed book.

So I still think: and yet I suspect myself to credulity; certainly I have to accuse myself, otherwise, of being an inexpert gardener.

Fan,—as I imagined,—possessed all human blessings except a brain, and a window toward the peaks. Brains I meant to contribute,—call it a grafting process, in the figure of speech,—and Diantha was to be the clear pane through which he should see stars and snow-caps.

Well! I am not omnipotent.

Diantha needed to ride on a full, free current of life. . . . She has not had the strength to sustain its urgency. Perhaps I have broken her.

As to Josie, poor dear, I never gave her my full attention. Perhaps she might have developed a soul if I had poked her through the eye of a needle; but I thought her shoulders were too broad to make such an attempt plausible. Frankly, Josie is too completely her mother's child to attract my love.

Why, I wonder, do I give Tolman credit for a soul? Because he is my father's son? He is a good man, a strong man, but so completely adapted to his environment as to leave an amateur deity no handle to worry him by. An Edgar Marriott, not his brother, would probably say that Tolman had already attained his spiritual capacity. But I see Tolman with the eyes of Father and Mother, who thought him capable of being the greatest man in the world. I picture Mother among the blessed, surveying his bald and grizzling pow with slight annoyance because he has not run for President, nor even been suggested for the nomination.

What if Tolman had married Naomi Cranston, and I Daisy Pellew? Unthinkable, and yet perhaps it would have given a better chance to my super-race!

Mat promised to do well. My endeavor was to tie him to a line of conduct that would give play to what he had of his mother's principle and his father's nimbleness. But Mat's "Rag" would now be bankrupt except for leniency among the creditors; and, far from disliking the condition, he gives himself airs upon its solvency. The paternal strain is in the blood.

Occasionally I ask myself what Diantha has ever done to convince me of her electness, except look beautifully fragile and fling herself upon my sympathy. Amy is, I suppose, far nobler; but *her* qualities irritate me and her defects enrage me.

I myself have been Eddie's chief stumbling-block, and by our joint efforts I am pretty well obliterated in that capacity. He is my son; but aside from that he will be the biggest man of the new generation of Marriotts, and Diantha has given him what I could not. No, I am not discontented with Eddie.

Di came down over the week-end, pale, with the first marks of a methodical office upon her. It's a pity she has to be cast in that mold,—and yet she lacked, she so painfully lacked, initiative and courage—!

"Honest, generous, brave and loyal!" So I used to exhort them to be.

Some quality besides those four they needed, and I never gave it to them. Di still lacks courage, and Mat still lacks honesty, and Fan failed once in loyalty; and as for Herby and Josie, they have not ordinary refinement.

They lead *little* lives; they are masters of small circumstances. They compare themselves with their fellows, instead of measuring humbly beside the greatest.

When they are grown to their full stature, I may find I have done them injustice. This transition from infinite possibility to limited completeness exasperates me to the soul.

June 18.

Mat sent me a complimentary copy of his "Poems" this morning; and I find with amazement that I am in my fiftieth year. I am no longer incapable of being scandalized. He should be tied up on a bread-and-water *régime* in some dark cellar till he brings forth fruits meet for repentance. . . . Yes, I am an old man—perhaps even an old gentleman; for I cannot help feeling that the book is an insult to his mother and his sister, even though it does not mention them.

It comes bound in coarse paper of a modified petunia shade; it is dedicated as follows:

TO ASTARTE
MALIGN DIVINITY
THRICE WORSHIPED
IN ONE ADORABLE BODY
REINCARNATE.

Mat does not follow the newer school of stark and exact definition; nor does he disdain rhythm, of a distressful, lolloping sort. There is a petunia-colored refulgence over the whole book,—it is Swinburne of the Corn-Belt. And Astarte, or Faustina, or Melusina, as the thrice-worshiped divinity is indifferently called, is grotesquely removed from reality, in spite of frequent anatomical references.

I gather that critics more tolerant than myself find not only promise but achievement in the book. If he were not in the family it might amuse me: but I had hoped better than this of him.

He is enslaved by his own not highly original sensations. Who, I wonder, originated the doctrine that there was literary virtue in the proclamation of experience, as such?

He has got beyond my influence; he must work out

his own damnation. His book will do harm, among the tiny circle that reads poetry.

I thank God Eddie, in spite of their long association, has retained two qualities, sincerity and reticence.

Also some sense of relative values.

We wonder, Eddie and I, whether Claudine was foreordained to thwart me:—raising the further question of a dualistic universe. But even a spirit in bondage to Arimanes—if such she is—must experience some slight embarrassment in being publicly known as Marriott Powell's Astarte.

II

August.

The first number of the "Rag" since war was declared reached me to-day. It would appear tepid and trivial, did I not know it to be dazed. In effect, one is not built to receive the impression of an entirely new world, a world in flames.

The editors oppose and neutralize one another for the moment. Ames remains the Compleat Cynic,—he would die before he let his monocle drop,—he distrusts the ingenuousness of the Allies, and he is still waiting to sense the reaction of the Intelligentsia, so-called, to the catastrophe. Mat on the other hand is girding his loins for Armageddon; he sees angel hosts mustering for the last battle; and in a week he has slipped off his mantle, or rather his domino, of cosmopolitanism. And Eddie sits miserably between the two, hating all the makers of war because they lay a red hand upon fineness and beauty.

One sympathizes with their vertigo. For myself, I am a midge spinning on its own axis, and blown afield by gusts of wind. I read without digesting. I have, of course, lived long enough and trifled sufficiently with political economy, to recognize that other impulses as well as honor influenced the stand of France, and of Russia and of England. But be that as it may, they are aligned now for the fulfilment of obligations and for that deep fairness which is more God-like than mercy. Every soul that hears, reflects and has the power to act, must march to-day under the God of light or the god of darkness.

There is a stirring among the peoples . . .

To some great issue . . .

Meanwhile that gasping human barrier falling back upon the Marne, while we gather our forces . . .

We . . . I mean we as human beings; as Americans we are no more involved than the spectators at a play; but we taste of pity and terror.

People's faces are strange. They have been keeping house on the back of a turtle, assuming him to be a rock; and now that he has extended his legs and walked onward, the motion, the changed aspect of surrounding nature, and particularly the surprise, give them a lugubrious dizziness.

November.

Mat is utterly unhinged. He was here for three hours this evening, and I let him talk more than listen.

I must premise that I was utterly mistaken as to his going to the devil. He is young, and for all our good intentions we at fifty cannot recollect the impressionable senses of twenty-three. I discovered that he idealizes Claudine for her good tendencies as much as he suffers over her evil ones, and at obscure moments, he maintains, he and she exert a beneficial influence on each other.

But their creeds diverge and drag their lips apart,—if I may be permitted a line of blank verse. Claudine's creed is negation; it is more than a creed, it is an instinctive pose; and when Mat moves her to admit the validity of some standard, it is through the magnetic ascendency of a lover. She relapses in his absence; they both suffer. Mat's eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; and it is only a matter of time till he stops trying to show it to her, and lets her exile herself in darkness. Meanwhile, as I say, he is torn. His belief is still busy shaking itself clear from hamper-

ing skeins and tangles, and has not yet answered the far appeal to action.

For one thing, whether I misjudged him or not, he does now realize the financial responsibility of the "Rag," of whose assets his brain forms an inseparable part. And yet he is out of sympathy with Ames and Eddie, and they all stifle each other. They cannot unite on any key in which to blow a fanfare; and now if ever the public thirsts for the notes of clarions.

Again,—and it seems incredible,—Mat does recognize the burden of his family. I learn for the first time that Vesey, now that his children are all earning money, has withdrawn from active commercial life, and passes his time among files of papers, perfecting some scheme for which leisure has hitherto been denied him. He takes long walks, he practices the violin, he is charming to Amy, who is blessed with his company around her house all day. The Powells, very naturally, can barely pay their rent out of the pittances which the children are able to turn into the household fund; with Mat gone, they will drop below the water-line again. In a way it seems absurd that Tolman should not pay their bills, as he has done in the past and is amply able to do; and yet we are so constituted that such gifts burden giver and taker. And I am glad that Mat realizes it.

Memo: Do not assume to pass judgment on the limitations of your young relatives. They will humiliate your perspicacity.

January, 1915.

The "Rag" has come out international, pacifist, and Mat has sailed. Eddie brought me the decision, and asked whether I was to be counted on to back the paper. I assured him with some vehemence that I was completely out of sympathy with their policy, and that I would not permit my name to be used.

"Well, then," said Eddie, "I suppose you won't want

me around the house either." The boy looked harried and hunted.

I said that I was not yet so sunk in my convictions that I could not tolerate an honest difference of opinion over my eggs and bacon. So he agreed to stay at home.

He and Mat had had a falling out over the war, ending in rupture of relations; Diantha was dragged into the feud; Eddie suffered intensely.

"By God, I envy Mat!" he said to me once, out of a clear sky; then went back to drawing cartoons.

He takes his ideas from Ames now, as formerly from Mat; transmutes their radical platitudes with his horrible sincerity; and then chills the blood in my veins with the work of his crayon. He portrays the sentimental nationalist duped by grimacing masks; and I recognize myself,—without relaxing one whit my sentimental nationalism. He draws the Citizen of the New World tomahawked by a savage; the Citizen is Eddie, the Savage is Mat in a Prussian helmet. I do not admire that pose of martyrdom. The martyrs to-day are the young men who are staking their physical existence on an ideal, without vainglory and without attitudes. Calling them savages,—or, more accurately, the instruments of savagery,—is to the last degree ungenerous.

Claudine, of course, flew out here when Mat finally made up his mind to go, and one day he brought her and Diantha over. A more bizarre assemblage has never edified the eyes of my goldfish. I don't know why I had expected the thrice-worshiped Astarte to appear dressed principally in bracelets; I had seriously contemplated burning pastilles in a saucer to make her feel at home. She came, however, decorously muffled in chinchilla, and overlooked the narghile I had set out, declining even the harmless, necessary cigarette. The war, I learned, had changed her; she did not care to smoke. Mat looked benevolently from her to Diantha and back again, and as between their two purities, Claudine's stood

out against Diantha's like porcelain against white lilac. Diantha struck one as matter-of-fact and uninspired by comparison with Claudine's starriness of eye and quiver of voice.

"I have given myself to the Last War," she told me. "I am giving Mat."

She is a sensitive creature. Mat's *beau geste* has been her cue. She imitates Diantha's manner, with a result both funny and touching.

Until now I could not have endured the sight of her and Diantha arm-in-arm; I should have thought her touch pollution. But she is doing her best, and Diantha has accepted her at her face value. It must be a new experience for Claudine.

If Mat used to undervalue Diantha, he has made noble amends. They drew together during the weeks after his mind was made up. He is Diantha's knight, now, off for the Last Crusade. Her belief matches his own,—that their lives are the coin in which to pay their debt to God. They walk in a perpetual dazzle of sunrise, talking endlessly. In some occult way he has entrusted Claudine to her care.

She and Diantha exalt themselves by exchanging views on their idol now that he has vanished for a season.

. . . "For a season!" I cannot accept the possibility that Mat's life, which I have considered a thing of beginnings and false starts, with plenty of time for their rectifying, may be within reach of its term. Whether this is an end or another beginning, it mocks my prophecy.

"There is a purifying virtue in fire. . . ."

We saw him off, ten days ago. Humanly speaking, nothing touched me more than Tolman's brief parting with the boy,—few words, but an obliteration of differences. He gave Mat his hand, and told him not to concern himself about his mother and Di. "I'll look after them till you get back." And he walked away, ruffled with emotion and wrung with reserve.

At the last moment someone came shouldering through the crowd,—Eddie, with a grotesque pocket-cigar-lighter in his hand.

"Take this, old fellow, you may need it," he said incoherently.

"You're a brick to come down," said Mat. "Thanks."

"You're doing the right thing, going," said my son. . . . "Be happy."

"And you're doing the right thing staying by the old 'Rag.' Now you've found your line, keep her steady on it."

"God bless you, Mat," said Eddie.

As the train slipped out along the tracks, I own I expected Amy to faint. But she stood apart, tall and quiet. She is in no particular the crushed, tremulous mother I anticipated. Perhaps her power of fearing had all been spent on lesser things; now, in any event, she has come upon supernatural courage. She says God has taken her son's life out of her hands, and he is safer now than when she yearned over his minute misadventures.

Diantha tells me her mother prays; and yet I do not infer that she intercedes often for Mat's safety. When she speaks to me of him, she treats of him as consecrated to some design so large that she can apprehend it only by an act of faith.

She lives, of course, at high tension. There is a painful ecstasy in her eyes. . . .

Most people are letting the war move along like a play which has not fulfilled the promise of the first act, and which threatens to last till after midnight. We have gone back to our private preoccupations. So those of us who feel it in our hearts walk like ghosts among the living.

III

June, 1916.

Last week-end I spent in Lake Forest at Tolman's. On Sunday evening we were electrified by the news that the National Guard had been mobilized for border duty. "The Battery," of course, will go (only one Battery is socially recognized); and as Fan is a corporal, we other Marriotts swell with pride.

Daisy has been on one of the French-orphan committees for a year now, and given dinners for foreign propagandists, and hung out the Allied flags from her third-story windows; but since Fan has gone into khaki, albeit Mexico and not France is his goal, she sees defects in militarism.

While Fan is gone,—probably a matter of weeks,—Chloe is to stay at Tolman's. She is a likable girl, hand-in-glove with all the younger generation, but a particularly choice example, to my eyes. She will have none of the heroics in which Daisy indulges; one sees her on the terrace at the club, among large groups, making fun of her husband's prowess, and planning the most cheerful way of passing the time of his absence. She will not follow him to Texas, on account of the children present and prospective; but she will do the best she can at home.

He and she linger in the garden after the rest of us, of an evening. They have a most perfect understanding, largely wordless. They make fun of each other, but delightfully; and they anticipate each other's speech.

Fan is like my father, inarticulate.

October, 1916.

Diantha and I have made a discovery; we are putting Mat's letters into book form.

It is on these letters Di has been living. She is not the sweet-pea sprite of Redgate and Grenoble; the office has put hard smoothness upon her. She is Potter's private secretary now, and a segment of her enjoys the responsibility. But when I catch her face in repose it is as sad as Amy's;—perhaps not sad so much as hungry. She cannot live on husks. The letters from Mat are her ambrosia, and she brings them over to share the feast with me. Then for an hour one sees her features lit from within, like very pure alabaster.

I have fought my own enthusiasm, and assured myself that Diantha's ecstatic rendition intensified the quality of these letters. (She intones them as if they were the Holy Scriptures.) I have caught through the humor and the nobility and the genre-painting, that touch of the theatrical and self-conscious which I call Mattishness. . . .

But all the same a tingle ran down my back when she read me about "my three comrades," three daredevils of the Foreign Legion sketched squarely and grimly, telling the manner of their deaths, and giving them honor.

Empurpled? Perhaps a trifle; but so is Mat.

I can hardly believe that war has been, to most of the men engaged, the crystallizing agent it has to him. He has acquired direction and fortitude. The warfare he has waged has been a reality of mud and shrapnel, and his friends have been killed beside him. There is nothing of the drawing-room soldier about him. He saw action before he had been two months in France.

But beyond fortitude, he has acquired a faculty for seeing through the temporal to the eternal, and a power to write of it without false pride.

And to these gifts he has added, more unaccountably

still, the ability to use English which one may read with a contented heart.

So I admitted, once for all, that these letters of his were a contribution to literature. "Di," said I, "what would you think of making them into a book, and seeing how the public likes them?"

"Oh!" she said, "Mat wouldn't like that." Then with truer insight, "I don't know that he'd mind." And at once she blazed up with enthusiasm. "Claudine will send me most of hers. They're superb."

She visualized at once the binding, the photograph of Mat opposite the title page, the preface from my hand. All that remained was a little editing and typing.

And so she went off glorified; and though I still have doubts as to the opinion of the public, I delight in having suggested the scheme on account of its effect on her.

Daisy broke the precedent of years and invited Amy out to Lake Forest. I think she was trying to tap Amy's reservoir of strength. It is a fact that Amy has grown beyond herself in an extraordinary way. She looks unearthly, but one feels drawn to follow her and touch the border of her garment.

Whether she could communicate anything to Daisy I do not know; but Daisy, who is traversed by wild currents of anxiety, looks up to her.

We expect the troops home from Texas any time now; anxiety is almost a burlesque emotion.

I am always unfair to Daisy.

January, 1917.

The book was rushed through the press, and within a month it has run to half a dozen editions. There is a Mat Powell cult, almost a religion; and even we, his remote relatives, reflect some of his luster. Is it credible

that my reminiscences of his childhood have been syndicated and placed before several million readers?

The letters seem written in the exact key to set vibrating the heartstrings of the multitude, which presumably sees life tinged with purple. They cause aged maiden ladies to hate the Hun seven times worse than they did before. They lead young men to enlist in the Canadian army. I hear that school-teachers pin up large photographs of Mat in the classroom.

Meanwhile I sit, a prophet discredited with myself, to speculate among the goldfish.

If he can keep it up after the war—! the old stock may produce one leader.

IV

March, 1917.

Poor little Di has been living here a few days. Now that her mother is gone, she feels farther from Vesey than ever; and only duty and pity take her back to Hickory Place. She is very tired after the sickness, and Vesey leans on her instead of upholding her. . . .

But I would not ask her to leave her father permanently. The poor creature has collapsed to earth like a vine deprived of its trellis. He must have been fond of his wife; certainly she was indispensable to him.

Di says he has an obscure inexplicable grudge,—at Mat for being abroad, at her for going back to the office, at Herby for marrying, and even at Amy for dying. No one cares about him now, he says; and it is nearly true.

We talked late, those nights Di was here. The child was too tired to sleep. She had nursed Amy night and day from the hour pneumonia set in.

"She always longed for the peace of God," Di said, "and after Mat went she found it. . . . But it was too much for her."

It is not a natural thing, this joy through renunciation . . . perhaps, so nearly divine that one has no need to go on living after one has attained it.

For hours we talked about her plans for the children, and her influence. It used to be, so Di admits, negative: by force of her love and anxiety she kept them from flagrant harm. She had not the courage to lay plans as a rule.

"And yet," said Di, "I doubt if Father would ever have thought of moving to Chicago unless he had intended to have us grow up near you."

This was utterly unexpected to me. Tolman, Daisy and I have agreed for years that Vesey meant to exploit us and dragged Amy along, against her choice.

"Mat and I didn't use to think so. We blamed Father and felt badly. But in her it was a finer thing; you see that, don't you?"

Yes, I saw that.

"Of course when you offered to send me to boarding school, and I didn't want to accept, Mother wouldn't force me to; but she didn't like my going to the public high school. . . . She was wrong; it was just a prejudice, and since I've been in business it seems to me too bad to have felt that way; but right or wrong it *was* her feeling, and it was strong enough to print itself on me and make me stand-offish and disagreeable and inhuman."

"I wonder if it was she," I said, "who took you and me to Europe that time."

"Oh, no; Mother never acted as directly as that. I'm not even positive she wanted me to marry Fan. She was afraid of money, you know."

Money . . . we have cast it for such different rôles in our lives! To me it has been no more than the property-man; to Tolman it has been the hero, to Vesey the elusive heroine, to Amy it was the villain. And for each of us it has made, like Claudine Chesbro, the sympathetic gesture.

"Do you know what really killed mother?" said Di. "It was Herby's marriage."

"Why, that didn't seem to me out of keeping once you concede Herby's character and tastes. Eileen isn't really objectionable——"

"Of course not. You and I admit she's a perfect wife for Herby. But you see Mother was very precariously

balanced on the topmost pinnacle of—of reality: breathing thin air, feeding on light, almost. You don't understand, Cousin Edgar, the sublimity, the passive sublimity. . . ."

"Perhaps I do."

"But her one point of contact with the world was Herby and Father and me, just as she'd always known us. The day Herby came home with Eileen under his arm and said they were married, she lost her sense of stability,—she couldn't get a foothold again. You see, don't you? She adapted herself to Mat's being in the midst of adventure and danger, but she counted on Herby to stay reliably in the background. . . .

"Why didn't you ever ask him up to Redgate, Cousin Edgar? I've always wondered. He never had his eyes opened as Mat and I did."

"Even as a tiny boy, Di, you will remember that Herby was perfectly balanced within his own limited range."

"Herby is more of a person than you think," she blazed. "He could give us all points."

"Certainly; but he'd have missed his vocation as an intellectual. He never inclined himself toward such learning as did come his way."

And I turned from this pointless discussion to ask whether her mother had been satisfied with her career.

"I don't believe she cared. I'm a girl, you know. . . . She assumed that some day I should marry, and what I did till then was of no importance. She knew I wanted to make good with Potter Brothers, but I suppose she thought it was on account of the pay-check."

"You don't need the pay-check now."

"The money is rolling in, of course, but I think we ought to keep that for Mat when he comes back. I'm not going to give up my job. . . . Father wants me to let him invest Mat's royalties, he says he can double them in a year; but I . . . I thought best to take them down to Cousin Tolman instead."

Diantha used to cry easily. I have not seen tears in her eyes since Mat went away.

She says "The war brought me one thing; Mat adores me."

V

May, 1917.

I was blamelessly sorting clippings this Sunday morning when Diantha put her head in at the door, in an ominous silence.

"Do you want work?" I said.

"I don't think I'd better come over here any more," she replied. "I haven't your all-embracing tolerance."

"Very well," I said. Diantha should know that Eddie is dearer to me, right or wrong, than even she is.

But at this point Eddie walked in.

"I'm just going," said Di quickly and defensively.

"Don't go,—I'm leaving myself. I don't want to keep Dad's friends away from him."

"What's the row?" I asked.

Eddie did not answer. Di explained that Eddie had been taunting her with inconsistent Christianity in upholding the war, and she had proclaimed that her Mother and Mat were better Christians than Eddie.

I tried to say something conciliatory, but Eddie stopped me.

"No use, Dad. We see through different lenses. This bickering is horrible."

"Good-by, Cousin Edgar," Di said hysterically.

"Wait!" Eddie cried. "I'm serious. Do you think I'm going to come between you and Dad? I'll leave here to-day, and we'll wait till the war is over to see each other again."

"Nothing of the sort," I said. "Diantha, this house is Eddie's house and I'm his father, and I'd rather have him here, whatever he thinks, than you or anybody else."

"Of course you would," she answered, more evenly. "It would be perfectly absurd for Eddie to turn himself out." And she gave me a little good-by kiss.

This evening Eddie came in and sat down in front of the fire. "I'm a cross-grained beggar, Dad," he said. "Why don't things come to me under the same form they do to the rest of the world?"

"You have to follow your own lights," I said.

"When you and Diantha agree that a thing is right, that ought to be enough for me. . . . But it isn't, and I can't help it. Every time I think of the war I feel it hanging over me like a sin."

We argued back and forth a little, quite uselessly, without heat.

"The worst is, about half of me *feels* that you're right, and Di's right, and Mat's right. It would be so easy to let go and yield to that feeling! But I regard it as a temptation . . . to be wrestled with. All my reasoning tells me the war's wrong; and I can't go against that."

"Then you'd let them tear up their treaties, and violate the codes of war, and sink the 'Lusitania,' and do nothing about it?"

"Two wrongs won't make a right even now, Dad. What's the advantage of calling out the brute in us to tussle with the brute in them, so that at the finish one side will be destroyed and the other degraded? . . . All that counts is the little bit of truth and beauty we've dug out of the world's slime; if that's lost, what matter who wins the war?"

"You think," I said, "we can hold that bit of truth and beauty by shutting it away in some cellar? It's a living plant, Eddie. If we give it only the dregs of our dishonor to take root in, do you think it will thrive?"

"What you call dishonor I don't call dishonor; there's only a silly code involved. If I think it's right for myself and my country to work toward peace and civiliza-

tion, I can't call it dishonor for us to keep out of the war."

"That's the crux of our disagreement."

"I wonder if after the monstrous beast has eaten itself to death, there will be a few things left we can agree on?"

"Heaven help us if there aren't! I don't want to be a barbarian, Eddie, even though you think I'm barbarous."

"Di calls me pusillanimous," he said. "Dad, can you imagine what I'd have given to avoid that break with Di? . . . She's *my* bit of truth and beauty, and the war has taken her."

"Have you honestly tried to see as she does?"

"Dad! that's a silly question. As if I'd been able to think of anything else!"

"Well, the war is bound to stop sometime, however long it lasts."

"I'll never get Di back. We've found out how different we are. Her universe is my vaudeville; my realities are her chimeras. . . .

"If you've ever amused yourself," he continued, "by thinking she might get to loving me,—and I know you have,—I'll tell you now that I've always known it could never come to anything. She's as remote from me as a little cloud."

"Time will tell."

"At any rate there's no possibility of it now, after this cleavage. And so, Dad, you mustn't protest; you *must* let me go and live somewhere else."

My indignation revived. "What kind of a minx is Diantha to turn you out of your own father's house? Whatever she says, I can't get on without you."

"Thanks, Dad, but of course you can; and it's not on your account, it's on Di's. She's dependent on you for all her happiness; she *must* feel able to come here."

"I won't have a thing to do with her if you leave."

"That would be so childish, Dad. . . . I'll just get a room somewhere; I'll lunch here and dine here all I can."

I was boiling with fury at Diantha, when she called up on the telephone, and asked to speak to me.

"Cousin Edgar, has Eddie said anything more about this morning? . . . What I want to say is, I was wrong; of course my coming over to see you doesn't depend on Eddie's absence; we both belong among the goldfish."

"What made you call up, Di?"

"Oh, I reasoned it all out that Eddie would insist on leaving so I could go over there. And then I knew you'd hate me."

"You understand us pretty well."

"I'm pretty fond of you, that's why. . . . Yes, of Eddie too. Tell him that, will you, Cousin Edgar?"

VI

July, 1917

If anything could exceed my surprise at my own family, it would be my own country since we entered the war.

I ran into Josie downtown, with a stenographer's notebook under her arm, looking hot and exhausted. She instructed me to feed her a large, cool lunch at the Blackstone, and I did so, being rewarded by a most interesting series of confidences. They say the war breaks down barriers, and so it must be, when Josie and I are to be seen pouring out our hearts to each other over jellied *consommé*.

First I asked her what she was doing with the notebook, and she said she was training for a job with the Council of National Defense; that she hated shorthand passionately, but that it was going to be a fight to the finish, and she'd learn it or bust.

It seemed to me that Josie had changed.

But it was not to talk of Gregg or of Munson that Josie had commandeered me. She asked me if I had been through Fort Sheridan lately.

"No," I said, "have you?"

Yes, Josie had; she could mention nothing else. Every day she goes out to Lake Forest after six hours of business college, changes into an organdie dress, and drives her car up to the Fort to bring down an assortment of baby-officers for a bath and six-o'clock dinner.

"I mean to be married after the first camp," she said suddenly.

"Bless you, Josie!" I said heartily. "It's high time."

"I need your help," she continued. "*They* don't know it yet, and they're going to be furious."

"What makes you think I'll approve, then?"

"You've got to. You've helped all the rest of us out of scrapes, and I've always been jealous. Now it's my turn. . . . He's most unsuitable. . . . Mother thinks it's going to be Alec Brice; but it isn't. . . . Everybody proposes to you these days. . . ."

"Well, who is he?"

"Henry Todd by name; two years younger than me; you never heard of him,—nobody has. He has no money, —he's not a good dancer—he went to the University of Illinois:—I simply can't live without him."

"Where did you meet him?"

"He's in the same company as Alec. Alec likes him, he brought him over one Sunday. He's from downstate."

"Where?"

"Archerville."

"I knew his father," I told her, "when I was in the legislature." Josie almost embraced me publicly.

"A fine chap; leading citizen, ran the hardware store twenty years ago."

"He still does," said Josie her brown eyes glowing upon me. "You must meet Hank. He'd love you."

"How long has this been going on?"

"Since June tenth. . . . Now, Cousin Edgar, this is what I want you to do. I want you to let Father and Mother meet Hank under your auspices—son of an old friend—that sort of thing—before I tell them we're engaged. . . . And if they won't let me get married at home, we'll do it at your house in town."

"No, Josie!" I exclaimed with firmness. "I may have done odd jobs for you young scapegraces, but I've never incited you to mutiny of that sort."

"I'm of age, Lord knows," she said. "Do you prefer to have me go down to the city hall?"

"Dear child, don't get your back up before it's necessary. As likely as not your family will be delighted. The war changes people, you know."

"You can't change the leopard's spots," sniffed Josie. "Cousin Edgar, I just *blush* for Mother sometimes. She's so limited. She can't abide Mat's book, and I really think she sympathizes with Eddie,—oh, I beg your pardon."

"I don't blame you, Josie; I blush for Eddie myself."

"I'd rather have Eddie around than Mother; at least he's sincere. She doesn't dare say she's against the war because it's not fashionable; but she disapproves of it because Fan's in it."

"And you know," she went on, "if it weren't for Mat, I think our whole family would have a black eye. Eddie's so conspicuous in the papers, you know, with the trial coming on; and then of course there's Ernest. How Adeline could go and marry a German——!"

"There was no curse on German-Americans in 1905."

"I know it, and I'm not fair; Ernest is doing his very best, and he's trying to get a commission; but everything he does is suspected and misinterpreted, and Addie says she's sure her new upstairs-girl is a spy. . . . I thank the Lord every day for Mat and Fan."

(Fan is in Texas again, a captain in a National Guard "outfit,"—that is our current phrase,—drilling them for overseas.)

"And didn't we all misjudge Herby? He's not the fellow we thought he was."

"I used to be ashamed of having Herby in the family, especially when he wore overalls," said Josie frankly.

"He's scarcely conventional, even now."

"No; Herby's no parlor-snake. But everybody says he's a perfect wonder in the air. He's to be sent over very shortly."

"Have you seen *her* lately?"

"No, she's down at Rantoul. What do you think of her?"

"I imagine we agree."

"The day I met her she had on white kid shoes, and her hair was bobbed, and her eyebrows were just one fine line; but you can't help seeing what a nice, kind-hearted soul she is."

"Thoroughly suited to Herby, I think. What do you suppose my mother would have thought of a Roman Catholic in the tribe?"

"She went through a war in her young days. Probably she wasn't as rigid in her prejudices as she seemed."

"Herby has never had any doubt as to his tastes, has he?"

"No, he's gravitated to his own environment, and let the sacred family go hang; and I admire him immensely."

"It's funny to hear you even mention Herby, much more praise him."

"You don't quite understand, Cousin Edgar. I never was snobbish about Herby's overalls, as such. Lots of my friends have begun at the bottom and worked up, in factories and places. What jarred on me was that I thought he was willing to be second-rate; and now I see it isn't inferiority, it's just independence. And though he never cut any great figure when there was nothing worth fussing over, he's stepped up front so splendidly, and shown such superb courage and . . . dash. . . ."

"It's queer, isn't it? Let's drive down there some day and watch him fly; they say it's a sight. He took to it as if it was the one vocation of his life."

"Di says Eileen Dennis—I mean Eileen Powell—is going to live with her when Herby goes across."

"That's going to be rather a pill for Di. She's still got Amy's gentility in her bones."

"Never you mind; Di's a wonder."

"Dear child, when has anybody had to defend Diantha

to me? I'm silly about her and always have been. Since when have you become her apologist?"

"Since I was engaged," said Josie, with a divine blush. "She guessed it the minute she saw me; I thinks she's a spook. She says I'm completely changed."

"So you are."

She was delighted with me for saying that.

VII

December, 1917.

EILEEN is just back from New York, where she saw Herby off—or nearly off; the sailing, of course, was secret. She has been a game little creature throughout, but now that he is really gone, she has collapsed on Diantha's hands.

Di is once again in a vortex. Besides the complications of housekeeping,—and I gather that both Vesey and Eileen provide difficult moments,—she has been absorbed into the Speaker's Bureau.

Three years ago the odds against Diantha's ever speaking in public were about sixty to one; and not least strange among the experiences of the war, I count the sight of her on a platform. No one would have believed her voice could carry; but it does carry, in any moderate-sized hall.

I went down the other night to a theater where she was speaking for the Liberty Loan. Girls were waiting in the aisles with pencils and blanks; a man came before the curtain and introduced "the sister of Marriott Powell."

She walked gently across before the footlights, and stood bowing, and before she said a word she had won a stir of applause, half for Mat and half for her own beauty. (I wondered what her reception might have been as "The Cousin of Edgar Marriott, Jr.") She wears black, of course, and her transparent blonde coloring fairly shines out.

Then she talked for about six minutes. There was none of the banter and bonhomie of the orator; she spoke to the point, with a terrible and thrilling earnestness.

Her voice when extended loses its soft murmur, and takes on a violin quality that makes one shiver. When she finished there was no sound for a second, and then a real roar of applause.

She held up one hand. "Don't clap," she said. "Buy the bonds." And in a serious voice she announced the subscriptions, one after another, which mounted far into the thousands.

As I drove her home afterward, I saw her crumple and droop. She is not made of the rhinoceros-hide that thrives on public life; I verily believe the war will kill her if it goes on long enough.

Meanwhile, she is a celebrity.

Vesey is a lone cat these days. I met him in the newspaper room of the Public Library, brooding over a file with his mouth half-open; and I was sorrier for the poor devil than I had supposed I could be.

The war, which has swept in all the rest of us, has left him behind. No one is interested in him; it doesn't matter whether he lives or dies.

Perhaps that is punishment in itself for his misdeeds. I should so regard it myself.

VIII

My conscience gnaws at itself in regard to Josie. I betrayed her . . . and yet I dared not help along her scheme.

When she brought her Henry Todd to see me, about the last of July, I was greatly afflicted. He was an ingenuous young man with the pleasantest of blue eyes, quite infatuated with Josie, and not yet over his surprise at his own good luck. His speech was unpretentious, with the direct Western attack which my ears find not unpleasant. He told me that the weather was "real nice" and that he "didn't enthuse over poetry."

Josie sat by his side on the sofa, informing me, while he blushed, that he had been captain of a high-school baseball team, and worked his way to Europe on a cattle ship.

I kept tormenting my imagination for some picture of the future into which Henry Todd and Josie would both fit. And found none. In Chicago his own exertions would never lift him above the second rank, and the position of son-in-law to Tolman Marriott would be as awkward as a pair of stilts. If they lived in Chicago, Josie would soon learn to consider herself his superior,—a most detestable attitude in a wife.

Archerville was his *milieu*, where he could live honored and esteemed; but after half-a-dozen seasons of Chicago, I did not think it unfair to conclude that Josie had outgrown the possibility of being happy with the heir-apparent of the hardware store of that thriving little city.

Only one view had plausibility, and that was hideous . . . Josie as his widow.

If I had told her I disapproved of the match, they would have gone straight to the City Hall for a license, and then to Waukegan.

"He will come back," I thought, "after the war, and then she shall choose. If it has brought out the manhood in him, she can marry him then; if he remains what he is now, she will thank me." So I held him alone in conversation.

And to him I put the time-honored argument that it was selfish to bind her with the marriage she was so willing to enter upon, when he might come home disabled, maimed, a life-long burden. . . .

He looked me square in the eye while I was talking; his long young limbs forced themselves upon my vision,—possible cannon-fodder. I felt damnably old and selfish, as I sat in my easy-chair urging that horror as probable, which all my wish and instinct proclaimed a remote contingency. I wanted to say, "Dear boy, marry her and be happy, and God bless you both and bring you safe together again, if it may be; but live your little hour to the full."

There is something crabbed and hard in an old man's brain, that lets him deal cruelly by the young: and so I dealt with Henry Todd.

"You're right, sir," he said. "I knew it all the time in the back of my mind."

"Don't tell Josie what I've said; she'd be all the keener to marry you."

So he went out. . . .

Tolman and Daisy knew nothing of the engagement; Josie meant to tell them the day he won his commission.

When that day came he was ordered to the port of embarkation,—one of a small handful so favored. He had the afternoon with Josie in Lake Forest; she drove him in to town, and he took the 5:30 train East.

She spent the night with Diantha, and she has clung to her ever since.

She has heard that he is ordered to the front already.

I feel a traitor and a scoundrel when I look at her haunted eyes.

IX

March, 1918.

"VIOLATION of the Espionage Act." . . . "Aid and comfort to the enemy!"

They dragged in the last staggering issues of the "Red Rag," which Eddie admitted he wrote almost from cover to cover, during the weeks after Ames Bicknell enlisted and before the offices were closed. But I know, though it was never brought out in court, that Ames was not too patriotic to permit the publication, even then, of some of the editorial paragraphs written before his change of heart. The hands were the hands of Esau, but the voice was the voice of Jacob.

So the last of that precious gang deserted, and left my boy holding up the banner they had put into his hands.

He is worth more than the lot of them,—more than Mat Powell with his trench-heroics, certainly more than Ames in his Ordnance Department.

There speaks the perfect father; and yet even I who love Eddie am infuriated by his wrong-headed, belligerent pacifism; and if I were the father or mother or maiden aunt of a fighting soldier, I should hiss him in the streets.

Free speech . . . yes! But not while the world is afire! . . .

I long for the spaciousness of the years after this war, when at leisure and with consecrated hearts we may rebuild all of civilization.

But when to-day we had word of that dizzying gap in the Allied front, through which the Germans might have swept and so put a disastrous period to the war before America had even made her strength felt,—why

to-day am I returning from seeing my son off for Leavenworth!

I have a horrid impression that this conduct of his is just what his mother would applaud.

Daisy has dropped him,—washed her hands of him with ostentatious fervor;—though there was a time when he saw fit to refuse the money she offered toward his propaganda. Tolman, of course, is more rational, having less to fear from a bull's-eye hit by public opinion.

Little Diantha asked me to take her down to see him, bless her heart! It seems she meant to convert him. She was snapped by six photographers as we entered the jail; but she is not self-conscious.

I left them alone for half an hour. When I came back she was trembling with fury, and he had fallen into a dogged silence.

She said to me, "He's my cousin, and I shan't go back on him in public; but I want him to be sure that I think he's selfish—a yellow cur——"

"He's not that, Di. He may be wrong, but he's not yellow."

"Never mind, Dad," Eddie said. "There's no use going into all this. Diantha has made herself perfectly clear, and she has as much right to her opinion as I have to mine."

With that we went out.

Fan has been several times at the point of embarkation, and as often has Chloe hastened to New York or Norfolk, but at last reports he had once more been transferred, this time to Georgia.

Under these agitations, Chloe's reserve has never once broken. I hear she is considered shallow, because she shows no excitement. On the contrary, I give her credit for keen feeling completely controlled. Her youngest boy likes me immensely.

End of Edgar Marriott's Notes

X

During the early part of this winter, Vesey had, according to his custom, stayed liberally at home; but the presence of Eileen, whom he did not like, piqued him into another outburst of office life. As usual when a scheme was afoot, he became buoyant, gallant, and loquacious, and for the first time shook off the lethargy that had succeeded Amy's death. He was having prospectuses printed, elaborate illustrated prospectuses; and certain half-tone plates of peach-orchards, which had voyaged with him ever since his earlier years in central New York, were dusted off for further service.

Di paid little attention to his comings and goings. She was in demand throughout the Middle West for speeches, and she was proof-reading a second book of Mat's letters. Therefore the catastrophe which broke upon the household in April was a complete surprise.

With the first stirrings of spring in the air, Vesey flooded the mails with his brochure, which related to Michigan fruit lands. He had always felt that his genius lay in the direction of developing tracts of real estate, and now, heaven having sent him a capitalist to provide the property and the suite of offices, he had given rein to his talent.

The tract was in Michigan, and the prospectus spoke of luxurious soil, teeming peach-orchards (illustrated), commodious cottages, (likewise illustrated), profits convincingly worked out by percentages, strawberries, Chicago and Detroit markets, canning factory on the verge of erection; it painted the delights of the modern rural community. It urged the purchaser to sign on the

dotted line, before the last lot was snapped up. Payments were to be on the installment plan.

It is not denied that this circular was reading matter to intoxicate those who had been long in city pent. There was a brisk patter of inquiries at the offices of the Peachcroft Acres Company, where a sleek young woman had more photographs ready for display, while Vesey sat in a holy of holies, wearing gold pince-nez and writing his name at the foot of documents. In a moment of unbridled profuseness, he sent home a potted gardenia plant.

It happened that Diantha came back from a trip the morning after the arrival of this symbol of wealth. The fragrance of gardenias always reminded her of the first dinner in Paris, where Fan fell in love with her.

"Isn't it classy?" asked Eileen. "Here, let me take your bag and your umbrella. Sit down and tell me what's happened to *you*."

She was chewing gum, and her bobbed hair had not been curled very recently. The gardenias continued to send out their thick, dreamy odor.

"Nothing special," said Diantha. "What's the news here?"

"No letters from abroad. Poppa"—(Vesey)—"is chirping like a cricket this morning. He told me to go buy myself a swell dress, but I think I'll wait till after the baby gets here. I hear Cousin Fanning has sailed."

. . . So he was gone too. She had so far lost touch with him that this was the nearest to a good-by she was to receive.

"There's a telegram here for Poppa. Had I better 'phone him about it?"

"Yes, I would," Diantha answered. She was feeling a touch of the pain that had almost died out of her daily thoughts.

". . . Shall I open it?" Eileen was saying over the telephone. "All right . . . 'Washington'——you know those letters they put at the top. 'Use of my name on

Peachcroft prospectus utterly unauthorized, other facts misrepresented, whole proceeding infamous. I intend to take legal steps at once which will effectively prevent recurrence of situation. No use asking for leniency. Signed, Tolman Marriott.' Gee whiz! Did you get all that, Poppa?'

"Something's *up!*" said Eileen in her accented jargon, turning from the telephone. "Poppa swore a big swear and rang off."

"Let me see the telegram," said Diantha. "Is there one of those prospectuses around?"

Sure enough, on the Board of Directors stood first the name of Vesey Powell, Pres., then Mercer P. Watson, capitalist, Chairman; third Tolman Marriott, President of the Columbia Trust Co.

At luncheon-time Vesey appeared, ashen and battered.

"The game's up, girls," he said. "They can put me in jail if they want to."

"Father! Cousin Tolman wouldn't put you in jail just for using his name in that harmless way."

"Oh, if they get looking into it, there are lots of things they can object to. Now I want you to listen what I say, Di:—I believe in that property, it's good sound fruit land. I wouldn't wish anybody better luck than to hold title to forty acres of it. But you take this prospectus. Now in business you've got to interest the purchaser, you know. This is the best prospectus I ever got out. It's brought in thousands of dollars."

He spun the pages.

"They can pick holes in every line of this," he said. "Take the directors; half a dozen of those chaps don't know they're on the board, though they'll probably be jolly glad when they realize they are. Now this picture, —peach trees! You remember I've had that plate for years; I bought it second-hand of a printer in Canandaigua. I've always liked it. Well, at Peachcroft the trees aren't in yet. I just wanted to suggest the Peach idea to purchasers.

"Now here's another point; 'Transportation—excellent service via M. R. and S. Q.' That's true enough, only it's eleven miles over sand roads. They're sure to find out and object to it.—'Cottages'—there aren't but two on the tract. They can have cottages if they build 'em! What do they expect for a thousand dollars?—And of course some of those lots aren't as desirable as others . . ."

"What are you going to do?"

"I haven't just thought. I get sick to death of pulling up stakes and moving on. Anyhow I guess Tolman means business this time. 'Mr. F. Vesey Powell of Hickory Place will summer at Joliet,' I fancy, while his famous daughter stumps the state for the Food Administration!"

Tolman at this period was a dollar-a-year man in Washington fairly well occupied. So it was several days before his lawyer called upon Vesey Powell, and the unfortunate man had almost begun to hope for immunity. He was still attending to such business as came in, but in the prospectuses a rubber-stamped "Resigned" stood superposed on the name of Tolman Marriott.

But he learned that Tolman had not forgotten.

That night Vesey stayed downtown for dinner and posted a letter to Diantha.

"My darling girl.

"For the last time I am doing the courageous thing. The hard thing. Life has been a great game, my dear; and I've lost.

"She will take my head once more between her cool hands. I have missed her too bitterly.

"You three, my wonderful brave children,

—Good-by."

He took a Grand Avenue car to the Municipal Pier; and in the darkness he dropped quietly off into the water.

At least Diantha was able to break the shock to her brothers abroad. She cabled them that their father was dangerously ill, and two days later that he had died.

XI

"Look at them!" said Edgar.

Chloe had brought her two children in to see their great-uncle, and they were familiarizing themselves, as had the previous generation, with the goldfish in the aquarium. Tolman II was now four years old, and as handsome a young man as had yet graced the Marriott line,—brown and ruddy like his father, with Chloe's stalwart air and her smile. When he came into the house one was made aware of his presence by a series of shouts and chucklings, and scamperings of sturdy legs. He formed friendships with postmen, financiers and stray dogs, and made a point of showing his new acquaintances whatever he had in his pockets at the time. He was now balancing his roly-poly frame on the tabouret, and casting flakes of fish-food into the aquarium,—his gravity broken by a loud, rosy laugh whenever a fish rose to the lure.

"Look, Dubby," he caroled. "That's Gwampa Gold-fish!" and he turned, tottering on his perch, to exchange a delighted glance with his mother and Uncle Edgar.

Little Dunbar had been born during the summer of 1917, and had now reached the age of fourteen months, but he had never grown broad like his brother. He stood now with his slight hands pressed against the glass of the aquarium so that green light shone through the water on his face; his straight, silver-blonde hair lay against his silver-blonde cheeks. As the fish glided serenely across and up and down, his eyes followed them, full of wonder, and yet focussed on something beyond their scintillant grace.

"Don't you think he seems stronger?" said Chloe, with

her pleasant countenance turned to Edgar, and her hand outstretched to catch Toly when he tumbled.

"He's strong, Chloe, even if he isn't meaty."

"But he's so high-strung, he wears himself out; and he talks to himself, and he looks right through you. I can't understand it. Neither Fan nor I has a single nerve at loose ends."

"Neither Fan nor you shows it. But you're not a girl without a heart, Chloe. I think you've put your war-time 'ardors and endurances' into Dubby, even if you wouldn't let them crop out in yourself."

She looked thoughtfully at him, balancing his suggestion.

"It's a mean heritage for the little chick, isn't it?"

"I have the same myself."

"Oh, the Civil War?"

"Do you know, he has my father's eyes?"

"Mr. Joshua Marriott's? Was he a remarkable man? I never knew him."

"I'm not sure he was a remarkable man," said Edgar, slowly, "but he had certainly a look that made you think of eternity."

"I wish Diantha had some of your nervous equilibrium."

"She's simply wonderful as she is."

"She's killing herself. I want her to come over here to live, but she's Eileen's mainstay at present, and she wants to keep the house on Hickory Place open for the boys, whenever they get back."

"It can't last much longer now . . . Do you remember how depressed we all were last spring? . . . You know I'm sure Fan was at Château-Thierry."

"You *have* a gift for keeping cool. I suppose he's in the Argonne now. . . ."

"I suppose so," returned Chloe stoically. "I prevent myself from thinking about it."

"Di has Mat and Herby and Fan on her mind every minute."

"That's why she makes those amazing speeches that just bring your heart up into your mouth."

"I hate to have her stop making speeches, because they take her out of herself; but I tell you it's killing her. If the damned war were through and the boys were back, I could take her away for a rest. It's no use now."

"Does she miss her father?"

"Even if your own father were a blackguard instead of a respectable citizen you'd probably still be fond of him."

Chloe's good-natured mouth could not help curling a little. There *were* no blackguards in her own family—nor young men of military age in Leavenworth.

"She must feel the scandal."

"She does. That makes it twice as hard for her to go before an audience and win them over."

"All the speeches *I've* ever made haven't sapped my vitality," said Chloe, comfortably.

And with a contented, indulgent laugh she picked up her youngest boy, who clung to her shoulder in a sudden access of intensity.

XII

THE seventh of November . . .

The terms of the Armistice had gone to the Germans, but no sane person expected them to be signed for a few days more. It was the last lap of the race . . . we must not weaken at the finish . . .

Diantha was sitting in Edgar's room when the whistles began to blow their long triumphant screams . . . first a few, then more and more, lifting their tongues to the vibrant sky . . .

They looked at one another; her hands flew to her heart.

"Mat!" she cried. "Mother!"

The clamor grew, waves of sound that soared and beat against the highest vaults. One heard people running in the street.

"I must go out," she said. "Are you coming?"

"I think I'll stay here."

She flew down Michigan Avenue. Except for the whistles, there was a silence, a silence of hearts . . . And when people looked into each other's eyes, they saw tears.

"Is it true? Is it over?"

No one could tell.

But it must be true. Why else these shining faces, this awe . . .

As she neared the Loop the crowd became more dense, and its tone changed; joy was becoming articulate. Flags appeared; fantastic showers of paper danced down from the high windows; machines ran with their cut-outs open. Strangers shouted together. The streets were blocked with mad humanity, which fell in behind any en-

sign and paraded ridiculously, meeting and crossing other little parades, singing, crying, screaming.

Suddenly Diantha was seized by the arm. It was Josie, and they wept on each other's shoulders, then set off at the tail of a parade mad as march hares.

The newspaper wagons could not break through with their extra editions to the newsstands. The noise was prodigious,—cow-bells, tin-pans, horseshoes,—a third phase.

Like disembodied spirits the girls wandered tireless through the crowd, merging themselves in the rejoicing of humanity.

"To Hell with the Kaiser!" cried the placards. Diantha was hurt that at such an hour anyone should care to send even the Kaiser to Hell.

But darkness began to fall, and with it a fine rain; and the word ran from lip to lip that the celebration was premature; the Germans had not signed. The crowd drifted homeward.

"They *will* sign," said Edgar.

"Yes, they *will* sign. It *is* over. I feel it now." Diantha lay back in a chair, as white and happy as a spirit that might have recently climbed the heart-breaking battlements and won to heaven.

"And they've all made good; and they're safe."

They talked of Fan in the Rainbow Division, and of Herby in his *escadrille*, and of Mat still a *poilu*.

"It has been worth while for them, Cousin Edgar. And I can say now that even if any of them had been killed, it would still have been worth while."

"That's easy to say, dear."

"I mean they would have done enough to make their short lives stand for something. But as it is,—with that behind them,—there's no limit to what they can do."

"It's a new world," said Edgar, rising to her enthusiasm.

"I had quite a wonderful letter from Eddie the other day," she said thoughtfully.

"Poor boy!"

"I'm glad it came just now, when I'm joyful and tolerant and proud of America . . . He said he wanted me to read and understand just what he had gone through . . . in his own mind . . . It was a very moving letter."

"Do you find you can forgive him, Di?"

"I can pity him—oh, most immensely. He's been in the Inferno. Of course you know I shall never think he was right."

"Just so you admit he was sincere, I expect no more of you."

"He thinks his life is broken . . . It *mustn't* be broken, Cousin Edgar."

"You can help him more with mending it than anybody, my dear."

She lifted her chin. Even her dear Cousin Edgar was going rather far, if he was suggesting that she might marry a slacker. And yet there had been, in Eddie's letter which she did not offer to show his father, phrases of broken and despairing love that had moved her in spite of herself.

XIII

"Have you heard any rumors?"

Tolman was speaking to Edgar over the long distance telephone.

"Rumors? Dear man, I never hear rumors! You're at the fountainhead. What are they about?"

"This is so serious, I wanted to warn you. You know the word often gets around before the casualty lists come out . . ."

"Well . . ."

"They're saying Mat Powell's killed."

"Why, he's with the French; he wouldn't be on our lists."

"The story's in the air anyhow. I can't trace it. Don't let it get to Diantha accidentally. I'm cabling the Embassy."

"God, this would be too much!" said Edgar softly, putting down the receiver.

It was, however, true, and two weeks later the facts were verified. On the eighth of November, in a quiet sector, from which the enemy were at that moment in inconspicuous retreat, Mat Powell who had lived through four years at the front, finally fell.

He never knew the circumstances of his father's death.

XIV

"Fan's trying to get them to put another parlor-car on," said Chloe, dancing on one foot and the other to keep warm. "Does he think he's Mr. McAdoo?"

Diantha glanced at the hordes waiting for the gates to open. The railroad service had not expanded proportionately to the Thanksgiving rush.

A few feet away from their mother, Toly and Dubby, in charge of a middle-aged English nurse, clung to the handles of the suitcases which had recently been put under their protection. Their round little persons were buttoned into chinchilla coats and long gray leggings, their faces sparkled under squirrel caps. They were delicious children.

"Speaking of room, Di, where in the world do you suppose Uncle Edgar is going to put us?"

"Eddie says there are cots everywhere, even in the rooms over the garage. The poor boy had to come up to town at the last minute for a peck of cranberries. Egmont was sold out."

"Oh, of course Eddie will be there." Chloe's ruddy face seemed to harden for a moment. "I haven't seen him since he—got back."

"We can't expect him to go out of existence just because we disagree with him."

Chloe laughed. "I'm not going to be rude to him; but it does make conversation so difficult, when you have to remember not to mention pacifists, or prisons, or spies—"

"Eddie wasn't a spy!" said Diantha.

"I didn't mean 'spy'. I meant 'sympathizer'——"

"Chloe! Why should you assume that Eddie, who was

a dyed-in-the-wool pacifist, sympathized with the Germans, who were the quintessence of militarism?"

"Don't scold me, Di. You know yourself the name 'pacifist' and the name 'pro-German' often mean the same thing."

"Well, they don't in Eddie's case," said Diantha crisply, "and I think we ought to give him a new deal, now the war's over."

"You've always stood up for him," said Chloe, with a curious look.

"Behind his back; never to his face."

"That must be a great comfort to Eddie!"

"Give him a chance, Chloe. He turned the wrong corner once, but there's real material in him."

"I'll do my best not to step on his toes, Di, if he'll keep off mine."

"Not a prayer," said Fan, coming up. "It's the day-coach for us, along with the rest of the American people."

He was a man at whom people stared,—handsome, healthy, on the road to being imposing, when his weight should have mounted twenty pounds. He could have gone into any strange city and cashed a check with out question. His army experience had put maturity into his manner, but it had not quite worn down the ingenuousness of his laugh.

"Do you know what this party reminds me of, Di? Those Decoration Day patriotic sessions when Grandfather used to assemble the lot of us on the front porch, and make us a speech."

"I suppose Cousin Edgar inherits Uncle Joshua's taste for family reunions."

"It doesn't become an in-law to speak," Chloe put in, "but I've always dreaded this sort of thing, assembling people who never would get together except for the family tie. So often I feel a false note in the jubilations."

"There couldn't be a funnier party," chuckled Fan, "than Herby and the Mrs., and Christine and Luke, and Josie,——"

"And you and Chloe," said Di.

"And Eddie," said Chloe.

"And Ad and Ernest. Golly, what a gang! Uncle Edgar's a brave man. When are dad and mother going down?"

"They're coming in the car to-morrow morning. Jo-Jo has some suitor motoring her down this afternoon."

"Well! Here goes the gateman. Close in behind the children, girls; I'll go ahead with the tickets. Ready, porter. Get a move on, you young kids!"

At length they were established in the coach, with their bags and hat-boxes and hampers, their thermos-bottles and golf-clubs, their overcoats, magazines and picture-books. The party attracted attention by its air of opulence and high spirits. Fan, Chloe and Di sat together in a double seat, and in spite of the crowd, no stranger presumed to take the fourth place.

Just as the train started,—"O Lord!" said Fan under his breath. Then, "Hey there, Eddie! Here's a place! Put the turkey in the baggage-car and sit down with us."

Eddie stopped in the aisle beside them, his arms full of bundles. His neck looked very long, his head broad, and his chin obstinate in its self-conscious tilt; but he beamed at them.

"If you are ashamed to be seen talking to a man with a bundle, say so and I'll move on to the smoker."

"No army's too proud to associate with its commissariat," said Fan, moving over. Then he looked at Chloe, wondering whether he should have mentioned the word "army" before Eddie.

The country was full of gradations of gray and brown and silver;—a low-hanging sky, strips of snow, the last of the dead leaves.

"I've never seen Redgate at this season," said Diantha.

"It's slick," said Eddie. "The fireplace draws, and we have lots of wood in the cellar. Dad's enjoyed it this fall,

I think. Of course, he's staying there on my account, to shield me from the regular world."

Another uncomfortable silence fell. Eddie appeared oblivious of it and fell to watching Diantha opposite him.

She had changed greatly from the rose-and-honey child who had formerly queened it at Redgate. Dressed in black, she looked transparent, exhausted, full of distinction, but bereft of sparkle and fire. She had just failed of dying of the "flu" after Mat's death, and her forces were still at the ebb. And although ease of bearing had come from living in the public eye, she had lost in exchange the *naïveté* which her shyness had formerly sheltered.

"I've been hearing things about you, Di," said Fan.

"Go on and tell them; I've done nothing I'm ashamed of."

"Well, I hear you're seen very frequently with a certain person—"

"Piffle!" said Diantha, blushing.

"What person, Fan? You've kept this from me," cried his wife.

"It's recent, and very authentic," Fan wagged his chin over his collar several times. "Were you, or were you not, young woman, seen lunching at the club with a one-armed British major?"

"Oh, yes, *him*," replied Diantha, continuing to blush. "I'm just enough of a public freak still, so that people invite me out to meet visiting celebrities and lecturers and things."

"*People*," said Fan, witheringly, "don't invite you to lunch alone with their celebrities at the club; they invite you to sit next them at dinners of thirty. Well, let's pass on to another point; were you, or were you not seen pointing out the chief beauties of the Art Institute to a one-armed British Major, on the following day?"

"Why, I believe I did," she admitted, "but I certainly shouldn't have done it if I'd known I was being followed

by a detective. It was—fortuitous. I bumped into him at the door, and he asked me to walk around with him. It would have been very silly to refuse."

"Yes, purely fortuitous, you say. Now, was it also purely fortuitous that both you and a one-armed British Major spent Sunday with the Parotts in Lake Forest?"

"I hadn't a notion he was to be there!" cried Diantha, extremely red. "That was fortuitous, too."

"Did he ask you where you were going for the week-end?"

"Well, yes."

"And I suppose you don't know that Sarah Parott is telling all over town that he called up Mrs. Parott, whom he'd never met, and told her he wanted to be asked too?"

"That's the greatest nonsense I've ever heard. Anyway, he's gone now; he's speaking in Minneapolis."

"Successfully?"

"I haven't heard from him," she replied, with a rude grimace.

Eddie fixed his eyes on her, and asked with ferocity whether the one-armed British Major was nice.

"Not half so impertinent as all of you," said Diantha; and forthwith she retired behind a newspaper.

Redgate was unfamiliar, with the focus indoors, and clouds lying cold along the horizon. Edgar was in twenty places, making speeches of welcome, forming conversational groups and disrupting them, showing guests to their rooms or to whatever makeshift had been devised. He had ordered a big fire built, and had artlessly hoped to draw the young men about the hearth and let them tell their views of the war and the peace.

To his disappointment, however, the party refused to coalesce, and was soon cutting for bridge-partners or changing its boots preparatory to a tramp; and he found himself left to the conversational delights of Herby.

Remembering that in times past Diantha had reproved him for under-estimating Herby's character, he made a virtue of necessity and opened a conversation. Herby was quite willing to discuss airplane manufacture, in which he was engaged, and told his cousin, not ungracefully, two or three yarns of adventure six thousand feet up; but when Edgar tentatively turned the subject,—"Now about the Peace Treaty,"—he growled.

"Come on, now, Cousin Edgar; *finie la guerre!*"

"What did you fight for, then, if the peace treaty bores you so?"

Herby blinked. In his eyes was a dazed and slightly disillusioned look.

"They're all in it for what they can get out of it. We're left holding the bag. It makes us look like such poor simps," he said.

Diantha and Eddie, booted and muffled for their walk, entered in time to catch the trend of the discussion. Diantha leaned over the back of Edgar's chair, and affectionately outlining with her finger on his crown the area where tonic might well be applied to the waning crop,—"Don't you mind," said she. "First there was the patriotism epidemic and then there was the 'flu,' and now there's a selfishness epidemic. You can't judge their normal temperature by the figure they register when they've got a germ. When all the diseases are over, you'll find they average ninety-eight and six-tenths."

"Do you like having them waste themselves?"

"I grant you we're none of us good for much. But Chloe says Fan is going to be mayor of Chicago some day; and as she says so, you may count on it."

"What's that?" asked Fan from the corner. ("Three spades, did you say?")

"We're talking about your future," said Di.

"I'll come and tell you all about it after this rubber . . . (Three no trumps.)"

And silence, sacred auction silence, might have been enforced for another half-hour had not the snarl of a motor-horn proclaimed the arrival of Josie.

"Two hours and forty minutes from the water-works!" she proclaimed, entering arm-in-arm with a stout juvenile escort. "Here's the speed king,—you all know Pudge, don't you? He drove me down, and he has to get back to town, so I told him you'd give him a drink, Uncle Edgar. Is the bar running? I feel uncommonly like a cocktail myself."

"Glad to see you, Josie. There's tea handy. Won't your young friend stay to dinner?"

"Sorry I can't," replied Pudge, diving among his pockets. "Never mind the cocktail, Mr. Marriott; I've got a flask, and Jo's not too proud to drink whiskey."

Josie was quietly costumed in an orange duvetine great-coat and the *béret* of a *chasseur alpin*, and showed a Gallic extent of healthy ankle below her skirt. Her arrival threw one more discordant element into the group, for nobody there except herself and Pudge was a member of the particular smart set they adorned. Her sisters and their husbands had enjoyed since the war what Josie termed a "ghastly domesticity," by which she meant that they played bridge in the evening instead of dancing at restaurants. Fan and Chloe were "positively pi"; Herby and Eileen, socially speaking, non-existent. As for the war-time intimacy with Diantha, she had put that behind her with everything else which reminded her of her ill-starred engagement.

Diantha's eyes met Edgar's rather sadly; but she did not know that he was asking himself whether if Josie had married Henry Todd, she could have developed along any more distressing lines.

Josie was accustomed to thank her stars that she had been granted a sight of Henry in civilian clothes before "It" was announced; for a uniform had cast more glamor

upon him than a sack-suit could maintain. Her first evening with him after his return had caused her to loathe herself for lack of discrimination; and in a panic she had struck down and obliterated both his love and her own.

The experience had been unfortunate for both of them. Even though the engagement was a matter of conjecture, Josie's world knew there had been an affair, and she knew that it knew. In a half-unconscious attempt to persuade public opinion that this mistake in judgment had been a trivial and casual one, she had—to use Addie's phrase,—"set up as a baby vampire in her old age," and collected scalps for public display. Débutantes did not scruple to call her a "cradle snatcher." Her family saw well enough that she was on the wrong track, and tried to interest her in various good works; but she told them she got into her stride at two in the morning instead of nine.

And yet from several balls last winter she had gone home hysterical after encounters with Henry. He had not returned to Archerville, and his father thought he stayed in Chicago to work in a broker's office; but to Josie it appeared that he was taking a course in post-prohibition drinking,—reckless, ungentlemanly, quarrelsome drinking that led to scenes and scandal. Josie professed to wear the cynic's mask, but she was still simple enough at heart to miss her illusions when the orchestra played a waltz; her conscience tormented her with Henry's fall, and she threw her own hardness back in the teeth of fate.

"Can't you say a word to her some time?" Edgar murmured to Diantha.

"She can't bear to talk to me; I remind her of the raptures she used to pour in my ear. But don't take her to heart, Cousin Edgar; she's not cut out for a wild woman. Mark my words, she'll be happily married inside of a year, to some conservative old chap that her father brings home to dinner."

"How about you, Di?"

"Oh, Cousin Edgar, don't *you* begin about that too! I'm not going to marry anybody; I'm a cast-iron old maid . . . I'm so dreadfully tired . . ." she added.

Looking at her, he could see that her forces were, for the moment, spent; she had no rebound. Perhaps, as she said, she was destined for spinsterhood; perhaps in the course of years she might marry;—it was reasonably certain that she would not be able to rise again to the height at which she had lived during the war. Meanwhile Edgar thought of his son, at odds with the world, tortured, baffled, loving her as he had always done but morbidly conscious of the rift between them.

Here in the midst of the flock to whom he had given his whole enthusiasm for the past fifteen years, his imagination suddenly flagged and stopped. He loved the children, perhaps, more than when they had begun coming to him, but they no longer teased his sense of prophecy. Their lives were finite like his own, limited, dreary to contemplate. Fan might indeed become a mayor, Herby a factory manager. Eddie had broken his interests in two, and would remain half a sculptor and half a social reformer, wearing himself out without achieving any complete result. The most generous hope one could frame for Josie did not make more of her than the wife of some young business man like her sisters' husbands; and one prayed she might elect this course rather than continue her uninspired attempts at sin. Mat was gone, in one intense spurt of flame.

Dear children! . . . His thought followed each one on into shadowy years . . . They would live in their world; they would not remold it nearer to the heart's desire. . .

A scampering was heard in the hallway, and Chloe appeared in the door, surrounded, as far as a woman can be surrounded, by her two hilarious sons. Toly rollicked like a puppy, and little Dunbar imitated his gambols with frenetic fervor.

As usual, Edgar watched his favorite; and at a certain

instant he saw a change come over the child as the sunset struck against his eyes from across the valley. Oblivious of the cookies toward which Toly was cavorting, he stood squarely on his small feet, and the tension slipped from him as he remained in entrancement, seeing for the first time the ardor of the west, with its core of somber fire.

"Come along, Owl-Eyes!" laughed his mother. The spell snapped, and Dubby manifested a normal enthusiasm for pink icing.

"There's no fool like an old fool," Edgar told himself, stirring in his long wicker chair. "How young might I reasonably expect Chloe would let him make me a visit? It's all a question of catching them early enough . . ."

Over the disappearing cake he could watch Dubby gazing at one after another of his marvelous large aunts, uncles and cousins. And the child's eyes were the very eyes, blue, innocent and strange, of Joshua Marriott.

XV

FINALLY, after dinner, the host did succeed in forming one circle and making them talk. For the first few minutes a stiff patience with Edgar's hobby was to be felt; but before long the old Redgate established its grip on the remembrance of its votaries and they discussed and contradicted freely, even forgetting Eddie enough to make jokes about the war and to fight it over again.

The reluctance to talk about the future still obtained, however.

"It takes a brave man to tell his plans these days," was Fan's answer to a direct question. "If you mean what am I going to do to make the world better and brighter,—the stuff we talked at Grenoble,—I've seen a lot more since then, and I'm not so sure the world is worth bothering with, or thanks you for any trouble you take. Look at Wilson."

"Looking at Wilson" provoked the usual combat; but after it had to some degree spent its fury, Eddie was heard to say that the world needed good advice and good example a thousand times worse than in 1912, and that for his part he held it every citizen's duty to live according to the most searching dictates of his conscience.

All the eyes came around to Eddie. His cousins had admitted, severally, that he had been imprisoned for the rigor of his peculiar moral views rather than for obliquity of conduct; but they had none the less felt ashamed to acknowledge him and had subconsciously assumed that he would cringe like a convicted felon in decent society. Here he was, however, far from cringing, holding up his chin at a ridiculous angle, and laying down ethical pre-

cepts forsooth! They had been scrupulously civil, but this was almost too much!

"What do you recommend?" Josie asked him.

"I can't recommend to the rest of you, but if you're interested I can tell you what I mean to do myself,"—and without waiting for encouragement, he went out. "I'm going to live in some foreign community on the west side, and carry on my sculpture, and run a children's art school where I mean to teach them the principles this country ought to stand for."

"Teach them—Bolshevism!" said Luke Herron, explosively.

"A bit thick," Herby was heard to murmur.

Chloe developed unusual fire. "You've no right, Eddie. Just because you think you've been unjustly treated, is it fair to teach susceptible children things that will get them into the same sort of scrapes?"

"What things do you think I expect to teach them?" demanded Eddie.

" 'Red Rag' sort of things, undoubtedly."

"You know, Eddie, everybody would respect you more, if you took your medicine like a man, instead of setting up in business as an agitator." Thus, Fan,—kindly, with a touch of the judicial.

"Of course, the Department of Justice will be at your heels . . ." said Ernest Conrad.

"Have *you* had unpleasant experience with them, Ernest?" Eddie sneered. Rising, he surveyed the circle of his family with a look which tautened their nerves, and then walked out of the room.

"It's people like you that make Bolshevists," said Diantha from the corner; and those who had heard her address crowds recognized the violin timbre that came into her voice with excitement. "Hit him when he's down; misjudge him; suspect his motives; tell him he's a fool; call him a criminal; make it plain that he has no right to exist. But don't ask him what he really means, or try to under-

stand his point of view; don't help him to do better; don't give him credit for any brains or any experience or any growth——"

She stumbled over her words. The room was deathly still.

"You've cut yourselves off from helping him, now, with your Godlike wisdom," she resumed. "If you see him going to the devil you won't have an ounce of influence to stop him with. Pull your skirts around you, don't touch him; he's a jailbird! . . .

"As it happens, I had a long walk with Eddie this afternoon, and he told me what came to him while he was in prison . . . New ideas . . . Very lovely ones . . . He's on the verge of a change,—if you haven't driven him back into his old sullenness and hatred of things. He doesn't want to teach force and fraud and rancor,—he doesn't even want to teach economics. He's trying to get rid of his own pugnacity. He emphasizes three things,—no, it's just one thing; it's his notion of pure Christianity. There's no physical force in it,—it's something like Tolstoi, good over evil, non-resistance, you know,—and a square deal for the under dog, coming voluntarily through the good-will of the upper dog . . . and eliminating misunderstanding and class-hatred . . .

"You're blind, beastly, cruel, well-fed . . ."

No one supplied a word. No one felt competent to speak.

"I can see perfectly clearly," said Diantha, "that I've got to marry Eddie." And with this she left them.

In his room she found two cribs, and the English nurse, darkly illumined by a night-light, who straightened herself from bending over Dubby, when Diantha appeared.

"Where's Mr. Eddie?"

"I believe he's moved into Mr. Marriott's room, Miss."

As the door closed again, Nurse wondered whether perhaps Miss Diantha was trying to deliver Mr. Eddie a telegram. She seemed excited.

Edgar's room, too, was dim, and she watched him a minute before he saw her. He was throwing socks and collars into his suitcase. She had hoped to catch her breath, but the sight of him complicated her respiratory machine yet further, and she had a sick feeling of fright as though she found herself launched on a runaway horse.

He turned and saw her, and flung out his arm.

"Don't bother me, Di, I'm busy."

(They had treated him infamously, she thought; and that gave her courage.)

"I want you to stay and stick it out."

"That sounds well; but I'm not granite, I get angry . . . Don't you see, my sanity just now depends on believing that people are willing to be good; and if I'm going to believe in my family," he growled, "the more miles there are between them and me the better."

"Try them again. They're probably ashamed by now."

"Oh, you think so? *I* don't."

"I've been telling them why they ought to be."

His face lightened with tenderness. "You stand by me even when you don't believe in me, don't you? I don't ask you to do that, Di; it's too much."

"I always stand by you because we're such friends, Eddie; but this time it's because I believe in you too."

"That," he said slowly, "gives me enough to hold on by. I don't need the rest."

"But if I back you up, you *will* stay? Think!" she coaxed. "They're your first subjects to be won over."

"That wouldn't be a good way to go at it."

"Why not?" She was throwing herself into her persuasions. He must not cut himself off from his race

when he needed them most. He must stay; nothing seemed of any importance to her except that he should stay at Redgate till the first storm had passed.

"You ought to be able to see, Di. I've got to stand by myself, not use you for a crutch. There's a time coming when I'll have to be able to stand without you.——" he shrugged.

"That time won't ever come, Eddie."

"Don't make rash promises!" he cried. "You're the most generous person there is, but some time you'll want every atom of your soul to give to some one man, and then you'll be bound to take my share away from me. I'd rather get along without you now than go through that later."

She had stopped trying to understand herself this evening. What was this excitement that was overmastering her,—love? It was not the love she had known; but then she was hardly feeling at all, in the accepted sense; when she looked at him she vibrated from head to foot, like a harp blown upon by strange winds, with pity, with exaltation, and with terror. Flashes of the future crossed her vision, and she knew it was inevitable that she should be beside him, in whatever fantastic urgent scenes he might play his part. For this she had been born.

"Eddie," she said, "I want to marry you."

He stared at her. "Thank you, I'm not that much of a charity patient. If you don't mind, I'd rather you didn't talk like that."

("What an improbable dialogue!" she thought, in some stable corner of her brain.) "Do you think I'd ask you to marry me if I didn't——" there was a difficult pause, —"love you?"

(*Yes!* Now that the word was spoken, it satisfied her, and she knew she had loved him a long time.)

"Tell me!" he held her with his eyes, "What are you giving up when you say this? I thought they talked as if you were engaged."

"Don't you know nonsense when you hear it? . . . Everything ahead looks perfectly blank to me, except you. I've been living in the past . . . You can make something out of me. . . ."

"I'm not such a hound as to take you at your word. You're upset by that row dowstairs. . . . Let's talk about it in the morning."

"Must I beg you to love me?"

"Diantha, you know perfectly well I love you."

"Then there's no question at all."

"I won't hear of it," he said, going back to the suitcase.

All at once she was aghast at what she had tried, and failed, to do. In three panic-stricken steps she found the door, felt for the handle. But there was a miserable pause while she fumbled.

"Nobody but you would have thought of being so darling," he said, heavily. "Thank you a million times."

"Are you going?" she whispered. "After all?"

"Good heavens, I've got to go now; I can't stand it."

In the same whisper she said, "Isn't everything horrible?"

He whirled, and came to her. "You know I'd give my soul to marry you, if I had a different record, and if I thought you honestly loved me . . . (That isn't possible) . . . You mustn't let this really hurt you."

"I can't help it," she answered, on a thread of voice. "You don't understand. I *did* really care."

She caught one glimpse on his face of pure amazement before she buried her terror, her shame and her exultation in the angle of his shoulder.

In the living-room Diantha's outburst, and especially her final jest, had seemed rather poor taste; and an awkward half-hour having elapsed, the bed-time break was imminent, when a voice floated over the banisters,—and such a lilting voice as could command belief.

"It's all settled, Cousin Edgar!"

At once the crowd crashed to their feet, pouring toward the stairs to meet and make merry over this bizarre couple. The hubbub swelled, waned, waxed again, before it died; but Edgar did not join it. He sat in his long chair, and congratulated himself on this his last and most signal failure in the field of prophecy.

Then they came to him, and he gave them each a hand, and while they stood in a circle, he thanked God, in a flash, for being so resourceful a competitor at chess.

"This is the biggest escapade yet!" he said to Diantha.

"No, it isn't," she answered; and turning toward Eddie's transfigured countenance, she spoke directly to his eyes. "It's nothing wild or sudden or daring or dangerous; it's something that's always been, if I'd only known it; and now I've found out, it's the most heavenly peace."

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